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**THE DOCTRINES OF UNITARIANS EXAMINED, AS
OPPOSED TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.**

IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXVIII,

AT THE

LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.



BY

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1818.

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EXTRACT
FROM
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT
OF THE LATE
REV. JOHN BAMPTON,
CANON OF SALISBURY.

—“ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scho-
“ lars of the University of Oxford for ever, to
“ have and to hold all and singular the said
“ Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the in-
“ tents and purposes hereinafter mentioned ;
“ that is to say, I will and appoint that the
“ Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford
“ for the time being shall take and receive all
“ the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after
“ all taxes, reparations, and necessary deduc-
“ tions made) that he pay all the remainder to
“ the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons, to be established for ever in the said
“ University, and to be performed in the man-
“ ner following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first
“ Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly
“ chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and by
“ no others, in the room adjoining to the Print-
“ ing-House, between the hours of ten in the
“ morning and two in the afternoon, to preach
“ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year fol-
“ lowing, at St. Mary’s in Oxford, between the
“ commencement of the last month in Lent
“ Term, and the end of the third week in Act
“ Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight
“ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached
“ upon either of the following Subjects—to con-
“ firm and establish the Christian Faith, and to
“ confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the
“ divine authority of the holy Scriptures—upon
“ the authority of the writings of the primitive
“ Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the pri-
“ mitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord
“ and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity
“ of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the
“ Christian Faith, as comprehended in the
“ Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
“ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always

“ printed, within two months after they are
“ preached, and one copy shall be given to the
“ Chancellor of the University, and one copy to
“ the Head of every College, and one copy to
“ the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one
“ copy to be put into the Bodleian Library ; and
“ the expence of printing them shall be paid
“ out of the revenue of the Land or Estates
“ given for establishing the Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons ; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
“ nor be entitled to the revenue, before they
“ are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person
“ shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lec-
“ ture Sermons, unless he hath taken the de-
“ gree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the
“ two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge ;
“ and that the same person shall never preach
“ the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

SERMON I.

ON MYSTERIES.

HEB. iii. 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

IN this land, where by the blessing of God the enjoyment of religious as well as of civil liberty is secured to all men, where restraint is laid upon the avowal of opinions no farther than is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of good order both in Church and State, it is the more necessary that such opinions should be observed with attention; and that tendency to extravagance which too often springs out of liberty be prevented, if possible, from producing the destructive effects of disorder and licentiousness. In all matters is this necessary, but more especially in

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those which have regard to religion ; religion, which is the greatest source of blessing that mankind enjoys, when it is preserved pure, and uncontaminated by the extravagancies of human invention, as it is the most powerful engine to produce fatal effects, when corrupted by the conceit, and debased by the inventions of man.

I propose therefore to bring under our present examination the principles of a sect, which is daily striving to advance itself, and to introduce such disorder, by overthrowing the very foundations of the Christian faith : I mean the sect of Socinians, or, as they style themselves in these days, Unitarians.

That impunity which the Legislature has formally granted to them of late, appears to have awakened their hopes, and aroused their activity ; and it is therefore the duty of the appointed ministers of God's word to meet their efforts by corresponding exertions, to detect the fallacy of their assertions, and to prevent, so far as we can, the mischief of their opinions from gaining farther ground.

Unitarianism is not indeed calculated to become easily a favourite doctrine with the *common* people, but it catches the vain, and those who are confident in their own abilities and discernment. It is a speculative faith, if indeed that may be called a faith which is rather a system of *unbelief*. It relates to a most mysterious question, one which requires that which is not given to it so often as might be wished, a patient investigation; an unpresuming judgment; and a true humility, and submission of the weak understanding of mortals to the revealed, though incomprehensible, doctrines of the Most High.

But there is a shew of simplicity in Unitarianism, which is not unlikely to make impression on the minds of those who regard it superficially; of those in particular, who have made just such advancement in learning as suffices to give them confidence; and whose period of life makes them bold to engage themselves on the side of any novelty which calls itself amendment, and to follow the leading of a course, to which the name of liberality,

so often and so sadly abused in these our days, is applied by its upholders.

The shaking off of ancient prejudices has to many a flattering sound; and there is something plausible to the inconsiderate, in the idea of rejecting mysteries; of bringing down religion to that which Unitarians now call, and Deists always have called, its original simplicity.

But mysteries are in themselves no objection to the doctrine which contains them; more especially when, as in regard of the holy Trinity, the mystery relates to the incomprehensible nature of God. Do we suppose him able to reveal nothing that we cannot fully comprehend? This were to put our capacity on a level with that of the Almighty.

Analogy requires, that since in the system of the natural world so many things pass our comprehension, much more should the same be the case with the heavens and their Creator; where God is not only the revealer of the mystery, but his own inconceivable nature is also the object revealed.

The question here then is not, which party can *frame* a creed most plausible, or most agreeable to human notions of that which is proper and intelligible; but, which follows that creed which ought ever to bind us, because it already exists in the unerring word of God. It is a question not of ingenuity, but of testimony.

The Unitarians do not, like the Deists, profess to reject all revelation. With them therefore the holy Scriptures, though partially discredited, are yet in general an authority which cannot be disputed; and from them alone I am confident that all the points in question between us may be abundantly proved. To that authority the speculations of mortal fancy must bend.

It is not for us to reject mysteries because they are incomprehensible, nor can that pride of human intellect, which sets itself up to measure the hidden things of God, be justified by the rational, nor endured by the religious mind. The point to be examined by us is simply this, whether or no the matter offered for our belief be offered by the Almighty. If it be so,

the case admits no farther question. Implicit belief then becomes a bounden duty.

This however is a point which our adversaries will not concede, and declamation against “prostration of the understanding” is employed by them, as if it were allowable to set up the understanding against him who made it; as if the faculties of created beings were to sit in judgment on the acts of their omnipotent Creator, who gave and who limited those faculties.

We shall however have abundant opportunity for entering more fully into this question in the course of these Lectures. It is perhaps with many the chief cause of infidelity, that they have neglected the Apostle’s advice, “not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly.”

Such meekness and humility is a duty which all *Christians* acknowledge to be incumbent on themselves; and whatever others may do, we shall depart from our

^a Belsham’s Letter to the Bishop of London, p. 75.

own professions if we desert them. For what is the profession of him who calls himself a Christian? What is its real value, if, at the same time that he so calls himself, he deny and reject the Godhead of Him from whom we derive that name.

What the faith of Christians is has long since been known and established. It acknowledges, that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, is God and man. God, in identity with the Godhead of the Father, united with the manhood inherited from his mother. The Christian faith does not barely admit, that there was once a person called Jesus Christ upon earth, a teacher of righteousness sent from God, and now rewarded with a high degree of exaltation in heaven; but still, with all this, no more than a creature. A Christian is not at liberty to take so much of the faith as he may think proper, and to reject the rest; to embrace the morality and refuse the doctrine, nor to adhere to the doctrine and reject the morality of the Gospel. No man can be called a Christian, even in profession, unless he hold, not only that

Christ existed as the man Jesus here on earth, but that he was very God at that very time; that his Godhead had existed, in identity with the Father as to being and power, from all eternity, though with distinction as to person; and that he shall so exist till time shall be no more. This we hold to have been the faith of Christians as to the Person of our blessed Saviour from the beginning, and this the Unitarians deny. Whether the truth rest with them or with us will be matter for future discussion, but that such a faith is of necessity attached to the name of Christian can hardly be disputed. Let all who are captivated by the sound of freedom in opinion, and the boast of those which some call exclusively rational principles, consider to what those principles are leading them; even to the denial of him whom God has declared to be our Lord, our Saviour, and our God. Let them not rely on the sound of a name superadded, in order to affix an opposite and arbitrary sense to the appellation by which that sect distinguishes itself, which absolutely denies

the Godhead of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost. The same has formerly been done by unbelievers, who affected to talk of Christian Deists, and Christian Jews.

The name of Unitarian Christians, if to the term Unitarian that sense be attached which they affix to it, is a contradiction in terms. It confounds believers in Christ's Godhead with those who absolutely deny that Godhead. It professes that they who bear that name are hoping for salvation through his sacrifice of atonement, and his mediation, as consequent and dependant thereon; while they are denying the efficacy of that sacrifice, and reducing his mediation to nothing more than the prayers of a prophet and righteous man. Even Mahomet allowed as much as this, for he professed that he requested Christ's prayers for himself, and he ascribed to him pre-eminence above Moses and all the prophets. And what do modern Unitarians more than this? The *man* Jesus, as a mere man, who had no manner of existence before his birth at Bethlehem, who was *not*

the Saviour who purchased us by his blood, who was *not* the appointed sacrifice to atone for sins, who was *not* the eternal Son of the Most High: such is the person whose existence they acknowledge!

They grant indeed that Jesus Christ bore a special mission from God, and that he is now miraculously exalted to preeminent honour at God's right hand. But where does it appear in the Gospel that this is all which his disciples are required to believe? What great preeminence does this assign to him, above others whom we know to have been taken up into the presence of God? Such pretences are mere deception; and the addition of a highly respected name is but too much like a shield to cover their real tenets, and a snare to draw in the unguarded to the destructive errors of their communion.

Even the heresy of Arius came nearer to the true faith than this. For it allowed the Godhead of our Saviour, and his existence before his incarnation, though not from all eternity. But the Unitarians deny both. Yet did the general assembly of

the whole Christian Church condemn his doctrine, and stigmatize it with their anathema. I do not urge the sentence of that Council as of equal authority with the holy Scriptures, by which the measures of that, and of every other assembly of frail and fallible men must be judged. But it distinctly proves what was the sense of the great body of believers, at a time when corruptions were not so common but that they were examined and censured; and so near to the Christian era, as to be comparatively but little removed from the age of the Apostles themselves.

At that period human presumption had not become so fertile as in these days, in inventing corruptions of the Christian faith; and in that Council those Fathers of the Church assisted, who were most likely to know what had been the teaching of the Apostles themselves; whose opinions therefore, though not infallible, have ever been accounted as entitled to the highest respect.

Against the judgment then of the primitive Church, and, what is much more, against the express words of Scripture,

from which we derive our doctrine, does this sect maintain opinions derogatory in the greatest degree to our blessed Saviour; and it spares no pains in disseminating opinions, which, if received, would degrade him from the Divine supremacy, to the condition of a mere mortal, a servant, a frail being, capable of moral corruption and of sin, equally with ourselves.

That the audacity of man should broach such opinions is unhappily no matter of wonder. But that they who do thus should assume the very name which they labour to bring to nothing, is a proof of something very different from zeal for the truth. All who have *well* examined their tenets can judge of their names and professions; but in regard to others, it may well be feared lest the name should sometimes answer the purpose for which it is assumed, by putting them off their guard against the insidious practices of the Unitarians; lest it should lead those who do not inquire much into the matter, to conclude that there is no reasonable apprehension of danger to the Christian faith,

from those who assume an appellation which belongs, in truth, only to its sincere and faithful followers.

What is the object which they profess? What do they hold out as their avowed intention? To “inculcate the rational principles of religion, and the necessity of free inquiry, on topics essential to the best interests of man, as well for the world that now is, as for that which is to come.” None surely who consider this can be drawn in by the sound of its first words—Do not we know what has been in former times the abuse of similar language? What has been always the plea of Infidels and Deists? Rational principles, and free inquiry. The old title of Freethinkers might alone lead us to suspect the relation between the two parties.

I do not mean to assert that the Unitarians now hold *all* the same principles with the Deists, but that they hold that one which leads to them all, the supremacy of human reason, and its competency to accept or reject even the dictates of Omnipotence.

They lay great stress on “making persons of every class to comprehend and feel the dignity of their nature, and judge for themselves, of the principles upon which the duties enjoined are founded.” But this magnifying of the dignity of human nature is the very language of pride, and shews but little proficiency in Christian knowledge, as it was taught by him from whom alone we all profess to derive it. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me,” were his words, “for I am *meek* and *lowly* in heart, and ye shall *find rest unto your souls*.”

They who will not abide by any thing which they do not comprehend, must assert, that all which is above our comprehension is untrue; or, at least, that they are justified in treating it as if it were untrue. And what is this but to make mortal intellect the measure of Divine truth? What, but to set up imperfect and very limited faculties to judge of the acts and counsels of the infinite and perfect Jehovah? What, but to say in the pride of our hearts, so soon as we meet with any thing

in his declarations which we do not satisfactorily comprehend, Hitherto will I go, and no farther?

Let us, for the sake of common sense and reason; let us first perfect our knowledge of earthly things; of our own nature, and of all the created universe. How weak, how erroneous are all our speculations even there! How soon are we compelled to acknowledge that we see effects, whose most immediate causes we cannot discern; that we find ourselves to be parts of a system, the laws of which, except where revelation has aided us, we comprehend but in a small degree! Nor can we account for many of the wonderful productions or operations of nature, except by referring them at once to God; whose work we know them to be, though we know not the course and method of his workmanship. The truly wise man will be the most ready to exclaim with Solomon, “Hardly do we guess aright at the things which are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things which are

“ before us ; but the things which are in
“ heaven who hath searched out ? ”

Such being the case, the Church of England, which does not disdain prostration of the understanding before the unsearchable mysteries of God, which is contented to go to that extent which he has laid open, and to stop where his light ceases to guide us farther : our Church is ready to give its belief to this great mystery of a Trinity in Unity, because, though not fully explained, it is yet certainly declared, by Him to whom alone it could be known. Though life and immortality are unquestionably brought to light by the Gospel, yet it is, in this our mortal state, only such light as may serve to guide us to that immortality. The perfection of knowledge can not belong to an imperfect state of being.

If however religion be now rendered in all respects so very simple a matter, and so much within the compass of every man's intellect, that we may reject any duty, or any point of belief, however positively enforced, provided that we disapprove it ;

then are we all now far wiser than the wisest of antiquity, who admitted their inability to comprehend such things without a revelation from God. If it be necessary that *all* should be thoroughly fathomed by our reason, before we need to believe it, what means St. Paul, when he says, “^b That “ your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God?” Or what is this saying of the same Apostle, “^c We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, — which *none* of the princes of “ this world knew; for had they known it, “ they would not have crucified the Lord “ of glory?” What is this, but a declaration, that man is *not* able to discover the whole of God’s mysteries, of which this is the chief?

Yet since the Most High has declared these things to us, though they be only in part intelligible, we are bound to receive and to admit the whole. It may be called unworthy of the dignity of our nature so to do; but we must either receive them with-

^b 1 Cor. ii. 5.

^c 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

out comprehending, or we must dare to reject his word which enforces them. In this mortal state there will be many things hidden, "the secret things of God;" but we must nevertheless submit to receive them, unless we would be wise above the measure which he has allotted to us. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned."

So long as these adversaries of the received faith reject with scorn all prostration of the understanding, even before the throne of God, there is little or no hope of reclaiming them from their errors. The very snare of Satan, that same snare which entangled Eve, and led to all our woe, is, and always has been, wrought from our conceit and presumption. The right of human judgment in opposition to Divine revelation, was the temptation held out in that case: "In the day ye eat thereof, then your

^d 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^e Gen. iii. 5.

“ eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be *as gods, knowing good and evil.*” And the ambition of doing what is right in our own eyes is, and has ever been, a most fatal snare to human vanity.

But let not them say, and let not others imagine, that Religion has nothing to do with Reason, because it is asserted, that Reason could never of *itself* have discovered the secret things of God, and is bound to receive them as revealed by him, though it be unable fully to comprehend them. The province of Reason is not to scrutinize the Divine essence, nor to pry into matters which must of necessity be far beyond the reach of our limited faculties. Its business on these points is to examine the credibility of the Revelation, so far as regards the testimony which is to prove that it proceeded from the Almighty. It has nothing to do with comprehending things incomprehensible: but if, upon full inquiry, it find that the doctrine be revealed by the word of the Lord, Reason must bow before his authority which sanc-

tions that doctrine. Reason is thankful for such insight into celestial matters as is given, though only to a certain extent, and does not presume to press beyond the limits which must ever confine it. Our knowledge of the Divine nature is now only partial; enough to shew the infinite distance between it and our own; enough to call forth our awe and veneration. “Now we know in part;” and whoever has learned true Christian humility will be contented with that limited part, which is adapted to our limited abilities. In the next life, the faithful will be rewarded with the full understanding of all, which they have believed now, though they did not entirely comprehend it. “^f Blessed,” said our Saviour, “are they who have not seen, “and yet have believed.” What they now receive on his authority, though they cannot comprehend it, will then be fully made clear to their enlarged and perfected capacities. “^g Now we see in a glass darkly,

^f John xx. 29.

^g 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“ but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known.”

Let man then restrain his impatience till the consummation of all things. Let him not, before his nature be perfected, expect to attain to the perfection of knowledge ; lest such presumption, far from bringing him nearer to the object of his desire, should utterly exclude him from those privileges, which shall belong hereafter to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to them alone.

The great evil which leads, and always has led to infidelity, is the setting up of human reason as the measure of truth ; whereas it is only the measure of that testimony whereby the truth is declared. The matter itself which is proposed to us may be utterly beyond the reach of our faculties, as the matter here in question, the Divine nature, is, and always has been ; and while this world endures, always shall continue to be.

Man has no sort of right to doubt the possibility of God's existence, in any man-

ner which he shall be pleased to reveal. Man does not understand *his own* nature, and much less the incomprehensible nature of the infinite Godhead. When things are thus necessarily beyond the reach of human understanding, the authenticity of the revelation which makes them known is all of which we are competent to judge.

The certainty that these truths are really and distinctly revealed, though they be not entirely laid open and made familiar to our capacities, is certainty enough, and ought to produce complete conviction. Such certainty must spring from due inquiry into the authenticity of the revelation. It depends chiefly on the consistency of the present, with previous communications from the same source; which is one sort of testimony: and to this our Saviour himself appealed, when he said, “^h The works that I do, they bear witness of me.” “ⁱ Search the Scriptures, for, — they are they which testify of me.” The other testimony lies in the cha-

^h John x. 25.

ⁱ John v. 39.

racter and consistency of those, from whom the witness proceeds; and that is in this case unquestionable.

The Unitarians, as they love to call themselves, falsely implying thereby, and indeed asserting, that we are Tritheists; these Unitarians do not deny the testimony, as to its authenticity, but endeavour rather to wrest the words in which it is conveyed, and so to support themselves in their denial of the doctrine which it inculcates. But let Christians ever remember that of our ourselves we can do nothing. Let them never allow themselves to suppose that human reason is to fathom every depth, and that we are not bound to admit any thing which we cannot clearly comprehend. Let us beware of admitting generally the evidence of the holy Scriptures, only that such admission may give the more weight to objections afterwards urged in detail against the most important particulars; and let us not pervert and torture the obvious sense and plain interpretation of God's word, rather than break down the prejudices with which pride in-

spires the heart of man. This is no unfair insinuation, no misinterpretation of the language of Unitarians, nor any conclusion violently extracted from expressions, which were not designed to bear it. What are the very words of their own advocate, on the point of prostration of the understanding before the inscrutable mysteries of God? “^k Prostration of the understanding,” says he, “God forbid! If any one had charged us with admitting as a revealed truth, as a doctrine of Jesus, a proposition which previously to its reception required a prostration of the understanding, we should have regarded it as a calumny more absurd, and more injurious, than any which the ingenuity of our bitterest enemies has ever yet invented.”

The very point on which this prostration of the understanding was required, is the nature of God, in regard to the Trinity in Unity. These Unitarians are not called to submit their intellects to any thing *understood*, and so ascertained to be absurd,

^k Belsham's Letter to the Bishop of London, p. 75.

but to a doctrine, which, though it be avowedly beyond the utmost stretch of mortal faculties to comprehend it, is nevertheless well authenticated as having proceeded from the Almighty, as shall be demonstrated : a doctrine, which is to be received as one of the secret things, by which God tries our faith. But it is supported by such testimony, as may well convince our reason, of all which reason is able to examine and decide; namely, that it is sent from God.

The testimony to this doctrine is so direct and convincing, that Unitarians, in the pride of their heart, have set their own fancies above God's word ; and, in order to get rid of its evidence, have expunged and altered many passages which bore witness to it most copiously. Foul methods indeed by which to hide an error, whether they were thrust upon the adoption of them by vanity, or by obstinacy !

I will however no farther anticipate my subject, but, having thus opened the general question, will endeavour in my subsequent discourses to examine severally the

articles held by this party; as well those which constitute the main hinge of the controversy, as the other subordinate points which they hold in opposition to the Christian faith.

The first is, that there is one God, “and “one only Person in the Godhead;” and connected with this is one of their negative articles, in which they deny absolutely, and in no very decent terms, (as is too much their practice,) a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.

And it is necessary throughout this question to keep it constantly in our recollection, that the Church invariably and most strictly maintains the Unity of the Godhead. When it asserts the personal distinction of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, it does not lose sight of the first article which is the foundation of all the rest, namely, that “there is but one living and “true God.”

As is the case with all works, so the whole confession of faith published in the Articles of the Church of England has a right to be considered as one composition.

That composition is consistent with itself. Its parts were intended to agree with each other, as parts in one system, and as deduced from one source: and the first, the very head of all, was certainly kept in view, while those which follow, especially those which immediately follow, were composed. The question is not of the number of Gods, but of the number of Persons who exist in one sole Godhead. Nor does the incomprehensibility of the doctrine at all affect its truth. The whole subject of the controversy stands totally distinct from the question, whether a Trinity in Unity be, or be not, comprehensible to us; for both parties hold alike that it is not. But we have to examine whether the objections made to that doctrine be or be not well founded; and the whole matter turns on its divine authority, not on our capacity of comprehending it.

They assert, secondly, that our blessed Saviour was a mere human being; and they deny that, which our Church never asserted, a subordinate Creator, &c. And

farther, they positively reject the most important doctrine of the Atonement.

Thirdly, they reject the personality of the Holy Spirit.

After these shall have been discussed, I propose to examine their admission, that Jesus Christ is to be the universal Judge, he yet being according to them a mere man.

Fifthly, we will consider their doctrine as to the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, and the respect which they have in reality shewn to them.

And lastly, we will consider their denial of the eternity of punishment to condemned sinners.

I have followed; throughout this arrangement, the order of that confession which was published by one of their present leaders¹, in his Letter to the present Bishop of London; wherein it is fair to conclude, that the avowed doctrines of the sect are contained. I propose now to pro-

¹ Belsham.

ceed, with God's help, to the examination of those doctrines regularly and minutely. But I hope to avoid that offensive levity and indecency of style, which is too often perceptible in their pamphlets; a style, in which it is unbecoming to treat any question acknowledged by all parties to be of the highest importance; and which has too often betrayed them into language, shocking to the ears of all right-minded persons, because it is offensive and blasphemous to the majesty of the Almighty.

To him, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, we render and ascribe all might, majesty, adoration and praise, now and for ever.

SERMON II.

ON THE HOLY TRINITY.

MATT. xviii. 19.

Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

IN these words we hear the original institution of that rite, by which the followers of our blessed Saviour have in all times been initiated into the profession of the Christian faith; and it is especially to be observed, that the Apostles are herein commanded by our Lord's own mouth to administer baptism in the names of all the three Persons who exist in the unity of the Godhead. In opposition to this, however, the first article with which the Socinian, or Unitarian, Creed commences, is, that

“^a there is one God, in one Person only.” Herein consists the whole peculiarity of their doctrine, as to this point. For that which is subsequently asserted, namely, that he is the “sole Creator and Governor of the universe, absolute in all perfection, and the sole object of religious worship,” is the same which we and all Christians hold. The question therefore as to this article turns on the assertion, that God exists “in one Person only;” contrary to the received opinion of the whole Christian Church, which agrees generally with *our* Article, wherein the Catholic doctrine is thus expressed: “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible; and in the Unity of this Godhead, there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

^a Belsham, p. 5.

^b XXXIX Articles. Art. I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity, &c.

The question therefore is not of the Being, or Unity of God, but of the Trinity of Persons *in* that Unity; and therefore we must look to a negative article in the Unitarian's Creed, which explains more fully their assertion, that God exists "in one Person only." They "enter their solemn protest against the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, as an ancient and gross corruption of the Christian revelation; the primary and fundamental article of which, is the Unity of God."

Their assertion is a negative; namely, that a Trinity of Persons does not exist in that Unity of Godhead; a Unity which we hold as much as they. Upon that point then we will proceed to examine the question.

These Unitarians reject the doctrine of the Trinity, together with those other most important doctrines which must stand or fall with it, "as inconsistent with reason, as unfounded in Scripture, as dishonour-

^c Belsham, p. 8.

^d Belsham, p. 14.

“able to the divine attributes, as leading
“to very pernicious practical consequences,
“as gross corruptions of the Christian re-
“velation, and as obstructing the progress
“of the Gospel in the world.”

Their first objection, that the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with reason, is the old plea of Deists and Infidels for centuries past. But to that it has long since been sufficiently answered, that it is not *contrary* to reason, though certainly *above* its reach; and therefore cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it: for it is absurd to make positive assertions, or to attempt to reason on matters which are utterly and avowedly incomprehensible. We have no *distinct* idea of God's entire nature. Our only *distinct* idea of him is a negative; that he *cannot* be limited, either in duration or power; *cannot* be resisted; *cannot* be comprehended. So far as this we have *distinct* ideas. But when we talk of his positive properties we have no distinct ideas; because infinity is the general attribute which pervades them all, and the

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human mind can form no conception of that which is infinite. We know only what it is not ; that it is not limited in any manner : but it is most obvious that we cannot say what it is.

This may teach us how unreasonable it is to reject any thing that the Almighty has revealed concerning his own nature, because we do not comprehend it. One Person in the Deity, with all his necessary perfections, is, if we endeavour to explain all that belongs to them, fully as incomprehensible to mortal faculties, as the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead.

Even if we descend to earthly things, to which our ideas and language are more adequate, to our own nature, and that of every thing animate or inanimate, if we consider every brute, every plant, even every blade of grass, it is beyond our power accurately to explain all the precise physical reasons of their birth or properties.

The doctrine of the Trinity is avowedly a mystery. It is therefore of necessity in-

comprehensible, otherwise it would cease to be a mystery. And it is, from the very nature of things, impossible that the peculiar nature of God should ever be revealed to us in this state of our existence, otherwise than as a mystery; because it does not admit of full explanation in mortal language. The images, in order to express which all language has been invented, are taken from visible objects. But the nature of God has nothing in common with them. Whether in regard to his Trinity of Persons, or to his other peculiar properties, such as his eternity for instance; the nature of God, if considered in any way, is equally invisible, equally incomprehensible, equally above human reason, though never contrary to it; and therefore, if this be sufficient ground for disbelief, it applies to the divine nature altogether.

We cannot explain by human language, framed according to sensible objects, that which is beyond the reach of our senses, and has nothing in common with those objects. It is therefore impossible, that our

language should express intelligibly the hidden things of God^c.

When he is pleased to reveal to us any thing concerning his own infinite nature, we are bound to receive, in humble thankfulness, what he so reveals, though we understand the matter thereof only just so far as he is pleased to open it; and are unable to penetrate at all into the mysteries which yet remain unrevealed. Our nature and faculties are imperfect, and limited; God's nature and deity are incomprehensible, and unlimited. It is therefore presumptuous and irrational to expect, that we should be able to advance one single step in so incomprehensible a matter as the divine nature, without the guidance of express revelation.

^c It is not in man's ability either to express perfectly, or conceive the manner how this was brought to pass. But the strength of our faith is tried by those things wherein our wits and capacities are not strong. Howbeit, because this divine mystery is more true than plain, divers having framed the same to their own conceits and fancies, are found in their exposition thereof more plain than true. *Hooker, Eccl. Pol. v. 51.*

That this has always been the case is abundantly shewn by comparison of the Jews, who enjoyed this advantage, with the heathens, who, though otherwise far more learned, enjoyed it not. The Jews, a people far from distinguished for learning or those arts which human ingenuity brings to perfection, were yet wise to a degree to which the sages of Greece could make no pretension, in all which related to the Godhead: for to them it had been revealed, so far at least as it pleased the Lord to reveal it. While the Greeks, far their superiors in letters and arts, during the very era of learning and philosophy, were yet labouring in vain to discover that, to which human faculties can never, by their own strength, attain.

The reason of this ignorance with them was the want of express revelation on the subject; for Plato himself, whose faculties could go as far as those of any mortal, Plato himself confesses^f, that nothing short

^f Τούτο δη ουν το μέρος φαμεν φυσαι κυριωτατον και δυνατον, ως οιον τε μαλιστα και αριστα μαδαν, ει διδασκοι τις· αλλ' ουδ' αν διδαξαιεν ει μη Θεος υφηγοιτο. *Επίνομis*.

of an actual communication from the Deity could resolve their doubts and clear up their difficulties.

Even the feeble ray of knowledge in sacred things which they *did* possess, seems to have been either borrowed from the Jews, perhaps through the medium of the Ægyptians; or else to have been a remnant of patriarchal tradition, which might have been handed down from the sons of Noah to their descendants. And it is well worth remarking, that all in which the heathens made any approaches towards truth in their traditions of *facts*, may be *clearly* traced to events recorded in the holy Scriptures. Those traditions related principally to

Αναγκαιον ουν εστι περιμενειν, εως αν τις μαθη ὡς διὰ πρὸς τοὺς Θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διακωσθῇ. ΑΛΚ. ποτε οὖν παρεσταὶ ὁ χρόνος οὗτος, ὦ Σωκράτης, καὶ τις ὁ παιδεύων; ἥδιστα γὰρ ἂν μοι δοκῶ ἰδέναι τούτου τὸν ἀνθρώπον τις ἐστίν. ΣΩΚ. Οὗτος ἐστίν, ὦ μέλει περὶ σου. ἀλλὰ δοκῶ μοι, ὥσπερ τῷ Διομηδεὶ φησὶ τὴν Ἀθηναίαν Ὅμηρος ἀπο τῶν οφθαλμῶν ἀφελάν τὴν ἀχλὺν,

Ὅφρ' εὖ γιγνώσκοι ἡμεῖς Θεὸν ἡδὲ καὶ ἀνδρά, οὕτω καὶ σοὺ δεινὸν ἀπο τῆς ψυχῆς πρῶτον ἀφελόντα τὴν ἀχλὺν, ἢ νῦν παρούσα τυγχάνει, το τήνικαυτ' ἡδὲ προσφέρειν δι' αὐτὴν μέλεις γινώσκειν κακὸν ἡδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν· νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν μοι δοκῇς δυνήθηναι. Alcib. β'. γ'.

events of a general nature ; such as the creation of mankind, and the universal deluge. Among particular nations, which had later intercourse with Judæa and its neighbourhood, other circumstances may be found, connected with persons and things mentioned in the Bible. In sacred matters, the being of God, and his omnipotence and eternity, though corrupted by the fiction of numerous subordinate deities, and defaced by many impious absurdities, was still a truth originally derived from the same source. And, what is much more to our present purpose, even the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons, that doctrine from which infidelity now revolts, passed down with the tradition of matters of fact ; corrupted indeed and debased ; but still it passed downward from the same source. It was found in very ancient times among the Greeks and Romans ; and at this day it exists, together with records of the same great events, though in a corrupt form, yet in one wherein the original mystery is still discernible. It exists even now in the wild mythology of the nations

of Hindostan : a people situated nearer to the sources of patriarchal tradition, and hardly to be suspected of having framed for themselves mysteries, by abstract speculation, and refinements in theology.

A Trinity of Persons in the Godhead is a doctrine which may be traced throughout the books of the Old Testament, which are confessedly, by many ages, the oldest records which now exist, or which can be proved ever to have existed. Those books were set forth among men who followed the same faith with the sons of Noah, who had been the progenitors of them and of all mankind. The matters of fact, and the mysterious doctrines contained therein, were both written by the same inspired person who was commissioned to deliver the Law expressly sent to them from God : by one whose means of information, and whose peculiar favour with the Lord, place him equally above the imputation of deceiving or being deceived.

Now if a similarity of doctrine, particularly in points beyond the reach of human reason, be found among the descendants

both of Jews and Heathens, it seems probable at least that such doctrine was that of Noah the common father of both, “a just man, a preacher of righteousness,” and one who “walked with God;” who had therefore abundant means of supernatural instruction, and who cannot be suspected of having perverted them. We will examine first the Old Testament, as disclosing from inspiration the same matters which appeared, as retained in the form of tradition more or less corrupted, among the Heathens.

Now the principal evidence to be brought forward in *this* place, is that of a *plurality* of Persons, not exactly of a Trinity, in the Godhead: though we might be allowed to account the appearances of angels to Abraham, and to Lot, by threes, as some representation of this precise mystery^g. The names however of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, belong to the more clear revelation of the New Testament, and in the discussion of the divinity of the second and

^g As also the threefold benediction in Numbers vi. 24, 25, 26. and the doxology, Isaiah vi. 3. &c.

third Persons in the Trinity, in reply to the particular Unitarian articles upon those points, I propose to bring forward, from both parts of the Bible, the arguments which particularly affect that branch of the question. All which I shall now endeavour to shew, is, that the Deity was revealed by the Prophets, (though not always in express terms,) and was understood by the Jewish nation, as consisting of more than one Person.

It is a very striking circumstance, a circumstance which infidelity itself must allow to have great weight, that to a people whose propensity to idolatry was strong even up to the captivity; to that people, the God who declared himself so jealous of his Unity, revealed himself nevertheless by his Prophets under a plural name. It cannot be imputed to inadvertency that *they* used such a mode of expression; and when we consider the strong tendency of the Jews to Polytheism, and the heavy vengeance denounced, and often inflicted on them for it, we cannot suppose that language in which was conveyed, even that which might

possibly be considered to give an appearance of sanction to that vice, would be employed by *such* persons, if they could have avoided the use of it^b. We cannot account for it, except by admitting that a plural name was peculiarly adapted to their and our God, Jehovah.

That a plural name was commonly employed, is manifest in the original language of the Scriptures; and even in our own translation the plural form of speech frequently occurs, though one particular word, which ought to have been rendered *Gods*, in the plural, is commonly translated into the singular, *God*. For an instance, we need to look no farther than the third word in the book of Genesis, the very opening of the Law. “In the beginning ⁱ *Gods* created the heavens and “the earth;” and the same plural word is

^b Lord Bolingbroke, whose object is well known, actually argued thus: “When God proceeds to the creation of man, he calls in other beings to co-operate with him, and make man in his *and their* image. This “seems to lay a foundation for polytheism, &c.” *Lord Bolingbroke’s Works*, iii. 300.

ⁱ עֶלְיוֹן

repeatedly used in the same manner. This very argument is upon record, as having been strongly urged by a converted Jew^k to his brethren. “Why else,” says he, “is that frequent mention of God, by “nouns of the plural number; as in Gen. “i. 1. where the word *Elohim*, which is “rendered *God*, is of the plural number? “Which demonstrates as evidently as may “be, that there are several Persons partaking of the Divine nature and essence.”

In our own authorised version, though it is not guarded with that precision which would have been employed, had Unitarianism, and not Popery, been the prevailing error of the times in which it was made; yet, in our own version, abundant instances may be shewn of the use of the plural number in speaking of God. “¹ God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image,” &c. “^m The Lord God said, Behold the man is “become as one of us,” &c. Again, in the prophecy of Isaiah, “ⁿ I heard the voice

^k John Xeres. See Jones’s Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, iii. 1.

¹ Gen. i. 26.

^m Gen. iii. 22.

ⁿ Isaiah vi. 8.

“ of the Lord saying, Whom shall *I* send, “ and who will go for *us*?” &c. It is to no purpose to multiply such instances, which might easily be done. Let any one search for himself, and he will easily find abundant satisfaction. This only *ought* to be observed; that the expression here put in the mouth of God, cannot be understood as if he were speaking to the angels, as has been asserted by the Unitarians. For where do we find that God takes counsel of them, as to what he shall do, or what he shall forbear. “ ° Who hath known “ the mind of the Lord, or who hath been “ his counsellor?” The expression can be understood and explained intelligibly only by admitting, that one Person of the Trinity here speaks to another. For as to the style which kings on earth now use, wherein the plural number is employed in speaking only of one; (and this also has been suggested as accounting for the plural name in the Scripture;) as to that style, it must be shewn that they used it in

° Isaiah xl. 13.

the days of Moses at the very least, in order to prove any thing thereby : that objection therefore falls to the ground.

In the fourth chapter of the Prophet Daniel there is another striking mention of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, where “a Watcher and a Holy One” is stated to come down in the Prophet’s vision, and to pass judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, which is declared to be done “by the decree of the Watchers, and the command of the word of the Holy Ones.” What Holy Ones can these be who pass decrees in heaven upon the kings of the earth? What but the King of kings in his Trinity of Persons? The same expression is continued through the next chapter also. “^p *They* took his glory from him,” &c.

I will mention only a few more out of the very many texts, which shew that the name and power of the Lord are applied indifferently to more than one Person in the Old Testament. “^q The Lord said “unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right

^p Dan. v. 20.

^q Psalm xc. 1.

“hand,” &c. Here the name of the Lord is attributed to two Persons. “^r I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state He will put thee down.” Here acts of sovereignty are ascribed on equal terms to two Persons in the Deity. “^s I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent Me unto thee.” Here God promises his presence and protection, while he declares *himself* to be sent by the Lord of hosts^t. The doctrine of a Plurality of Persons is thus manifestly taught in the Old Testament, while it every where insists on the strictest Unity in the Godhead.

Before we proceed to that proof which, as might be expected, is yet more dis-

^r Isaiah xxii. 19.

^s Zechariah ii. 2.

^t There are in the Psalms many passages which shew the union of the singular and plural appellation in God, thus implying a Trinity (or at least a Plurality) in the Unity. For instance, Psalm viii. 12. “Lords,” in the plural, (is) “a just Judge,” in the singular. Condemnation is also denounced on those who, though forbidden to worship more Gods than one, should forget “Lords.” Psalm ix. 17. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the people who forget Lords.” So these passages would stand in a literal version.

tinctly given in the New Testament, it is not unworthy of our notice to observe that remnant of tradition which kept alive some imperfect idea of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, even among the Pagans; whether it were derived from the Jews, or from the Patriarchs, the sons of Noah. That tradition does not bear the stamp of human invention; and we may account for it perhaps not unreasonably, by supposing it to have been held in its original state, by him who was the stock of the various nations settled in distant parts of the earth, from whom they derived the doctrines of their faith, as well as their being. We find it indeed existing at this day among the barbarous nations of the peninsula of India, where the doctrine of three Persons in one God remains in their Bramah, Veshnù, and Sceva; though, as it did among the Greeks and Romans, it remains with them in a very corrupted state; and it is a remarkable coincidence, that the second Person in that Trinity, is, as in ours, a God incarnate, from whom acts of mercy proceed towards man.

This doctrine, if we had nothing to which we might trace its origin, would be unaccountable. But when we find that it coincides with the Christian Trinity, and with the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, which is plainly taught by the plural name of God, and by the threefold appearances in the Old Testament; matters which we learn from those which are infinitely the oldest of all authentic records; it is not unreasonable to suppose, that this religious mystery may have been preserved to those Indian heathen by tradition, even from the time when they separated themselves from the original seat of the common progenitors of mankind.

They would naturally hand down their own faith, as we find that it was handed down in other cases; for instance, in the book of Job probably a descendant from Esau; who plainly mentions the Redeemer, and calls him by the name of God. That faith soon lost its purity, except in the records of the one chosen nation; while among the others, fragments broken and corrupted alone remained;

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yet, by God's providence, fragments so singular and remarkable, as when compared with the true and perfect doctrine, to give abundant evidence that they proceeded from the same source. Of the religion of the Eastern nations in general we yet know comparatively little, and better knowledge will probably throw clearer light on the traces by which their superstitions are connected with, and were derived from the true faith.

But how shall we account for the very strong and remarkable resemblance which exists, among all the darkness of heathen superstition, between that corrupt Trinity which was found in the Roman and Samothracian Cabala, and the true Trinity of Christians and of Holy Writ? How; except by concluding that those superstitions proceeded from the same source with the true faith, and that they were imperfectly delivered to the ancestors of those nations, by the sons of Noah; or else that they were borrowed by the Greeks from Egypt, and by the Egyptians from Israel. The Samothracian Cabiri were the origin of the

Capitoline Trinity at Rome. Now the very word *Cabiri*, or *Cabirim*, *powerful ones*, is Hebrew^u, and shews the origin of the doctrine, which was said to have been brought, within eight hundred years from the deluge, from Samothracia into Phrygia, and from thence to Rome. It is applied to the three preeminent deities who had sprang, by an easy corruption, out of the real and original doctrine of a Trinity in Unity. In the Capitoline Trinity of Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno, we may observe, that Minerva, the Divine wisdom, is the second person; no slight coincidence with the Wisdom of God, the Word.

The Platonic Trinity, as it was held and taught by his followers, till they deviated, as was the case in later times, from the doctrine, consisted of ^{*}three original hypostases:—the first, ^γself-existence and goodness; the second, mind; thestthird, life

^u כַּבִּירִים. καβίροι. θεοὶ δυνατοί. See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 451.

^{*} Τρεῖς ἀρχαὶ καὶ ὑποστάσεις.

^γ Το ἐν καὶ τ' ἀγαθόν, νοῦς, καὶ ψυχή.

or soul. Neither was this doctrine invented by Plato, as we are told by Plotinus, who asserts ^a that it had been in ancient time uttered before his days, though not distinctly; having been delivered by Parmenides. But Parmenides followed the Pythagorean system, and therefore the doctrine may be carried up to Pythagoras; and indeed it is by various ancient authors asserted to have been the doctrine of his School^a. Now Pythagoras, as they declare^b, was instructed in the Orphic mysteries relating to the gods, from whence all the Grecian theology was derived; from whence also Plato afterwards learned it;

^a See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 546.

Απαντα γαρ ἡ παρ' Ἑλλήνων σοφία τῆς Οὐρβικῆς ἐστὶ μυσαγωγίας ἐκγονος· πρῶτον μὲν Πυθαγόρῃ παρὰ Ἀγλαοφίμῃ τα περὶ Θεῶν ὀργία διδάχθεντος, δεύτερον δὲ Πλάτωνος ὑποδεξαμένου τὴν πάντεσσι περὶ τούτων ἐπιστημὴν, ἐκ τε τῶν Πυθαγορείων καὶ Οὐρβικῶν γραμμάτων. *Theol. Platonis*, l. i. c. v.

^a A Trinity of Persons for the purpose of creation was taught by the Pythagoreans, and by Xenocrates. Αὐτὴ τε ἀριθμὸς στοιχεῖα τὸ Ἐν, καὶ ἡ Δυάς ἡ ἀορίστος, ἣν ὑπετίθεσαν τῷ Ἐνὶ πρὸς γενέσιν τε πληθεὺς τῶν ἀριθμῶν. *Themistius*, lib. i. *de Anima*.

^b Procli Comment. in *Timæum Platonis*, l. ii. 94.

and a Trinity was a part of those Orphic mysteries. ^c It is known that all these three persons, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato, had travelled into Egypt, and had been initiated into the secrets of the Egyptian theology; and therefore it seems most probable, that a Trinity was one part of their Hermaïcal doctrine, as it was called ^d.

Thus then a Trinity in the Godhead may be traced on the one hand to the Egyptians, a people much conversant with Israel from very early times; and on the other hand, to the island of Samothracia, within eight hundred years from the de-

^c Φανης, υπανος, κρονος. See Cudworth's Intel. Syst. 547.

^d It is not to be disputed that the existence of the Platonic Triad or Trinity, as deities, has been, and may well be called in question. Nor is much weight rested upon it here. The present argument only brings it forward, if it may be admitted, collaterally, as some additional confirmation to that which is more decidedly proved by the other evidence here adduced, viz. that some idea of a Trinity in the Godhead did exist among the heathens. That it was taught by Plato himself is not here asserted, but that it was the doctrine of his School after, as it had been of other philosophers before him.

luge. Whether it came from Japheth, or from the Israelites, it is still the most ancient doctrine of theology in the world, after that of the simple existence of a God. It ought not to excite wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity was corrupted by Platonists and others, so that three gods were often substituted for three hypostases, or persons, in one God. It is far more wonderful that a doctrine so mysterious should have continued to exist at all: and it may not be too much for Christians to conclude, that if it had been of men, it must have come to nought; but since it was of God, nothing could overthrow it.

The proofs of this doctrine are, as might be expected, far more explicit and precise in the New, than in the Old Testament. The names of the three persons are mentioned, indifferently, as performing acts of sovereignty and divine power; and they are used without distinction as to order and precedence; a circumstance which plainly intimates the perfect equality which exists between them, and which is essential to their Unity in the Godhead.

The first and most important proof of this nature, is the use of all the three names in the sacrament of baptism, and that by our Saviour's own express command; for it is impossible, that in the very rite by which he appointed the initiation of converts into the Christian faith, any thing should be introduced by him which could be injurious to that faith. His words are these: "Go therefore and teach all nations;" or, as in the margin of our translation, "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." How distinctly are all the three Persons here named, as equally essential to that rite which was to be the seal of Christians for ever! And yet Christianity came to supersede among the heathens their polytheism; and it always teaches, that there is but One God. If therefore, in the rite by which converts are to be initiated into that faith, it be necessary to specify three Persons in the Godhead, it follows, that a

• Matt. xxviii. 19.

† Μαθητευατε.

Trinity must be reconcilable with the Unity of God.

The Apostolic blessing is another powerful evidence to the same purpose. It shews both the distinction of the Persons, and their equality in the Godhead; for being in respect of Godhead One, it signifies not which Person is first named. Here the Son stands first, “ & The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”

I shall, for the present, satisfy myself with these two passages, because they relate to most solemn occasions; on which it is not to be imagined without impiety, that our Lord and his Apostle could have used any other language, than that which it was proper for them to deliver, and for their converts to receive. If we can imagine any thing of error or inadvertency in the very initiatory rite ordained by Christ himself; by our Lord, or even as the Unitarians call him, by “ a prophet of the highest order;” if we can conceive him

& 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

to have been capable of mistake, or inaccuracy, in instituting a form as the distinguishing badge of that faith which he came to reveal, there is an end to all respect for his Deity; and we are even guilty of rejecting and insulting his claim to divine inspiration altogether.

It would be easy to multiply proofs from the New Testament in confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. But as the general question will, of necessity, be discussed, in proving the Deity of the separate Persons, it seems unnecessary to insist further on the point at present.

This doctrine then is traced up to the highest antiquity; and it cannot be proved to be, as the Unitarians say, “inconsistent with reason;” because, inasmuch as it is avowedly incomprehensible to our faculties, we are not capable of deciding on its consistency or inconsistency with a higher reason than ours. It stands upon the authority of testimony; of that word which declares it, such as it is, and in so much as it is revealed, to be a revelation from God. That it is not “unfounded in

“Scripture,” has already been shewn shortly, and shall be, by God’s help, more abundantly shewn, in treating of the several Persons who constitute the Trinity in the Divine Unity. That it is not “dishonourable to the divine attributes,” is sufficiently plain, because it takes nothing from the Almighty, the one only God^h, and attributes every thing excellent to him; while it teaches, that *in* that Godhead, and not to the diminution or dishonour of it, there exist in a mysterious manner, Three Equal Persons. That it does not “lead to pernicious practical consequences,” is clear; for the consequences, to which allusion is here made, must be those of which they accuse us, namely, the worship of more Gods than one, and of

^h These three names of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must denote a threefold difference or distinction belonging to God, but such as is consistent with the unity and simplicity of the divine nature: for each of these includes the whole idea of God, and something more. So far as they express the nature of God, they all adequately and exactly signify the same. It is the additional signification that makes all the distinction between them. *Bp. Gastrell on the Trinity.*

course, the neglect of that which is solely due to the one Almighty. But this was answered, in that which was replied to them upon the last preceding point. That it is not “a corruption of the Christian doctrine,” is proved by the very words of the New Testament which explicitly teach it. That it “obstructs the progress of the Gospel in the world,” is an assertion which remains to be proved by those who advance it. And even though it were proved, we should find no authority therein for setting aside a doctrine expressly taught in the word of God.

That the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, was that of the earliest times of Christianity, and was the creed of all the apostolic Fathersⁱ, is easily to be

ⁱ “Unus est omnia, dum ex uno omnia per substantiam scilicet unitatem: et nihilominus custoditur *οικονομία* sacramentum tres dirigens, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum.”—“Quoniam et ipsa regula fidei a pluribus Deis sæculi, ad unicum et verum Deum transfert, non intelligentes unicum quidem, sed cum sua *οικονομία* credendum; numerum et dispositionem Trinitatis divisionem præsumentes Unitatis. Quando Unitas ex semetipsa derivans Trinitatem, non destru-

proved. But with Unitarians that argument would perhaps have little weight;

“atur ab illa sed administretur.” *Tertullian. adv. Praxeam, sub initio.*

‘Ο Κλημης αρχαιοτερος, Ζη, ρησιν, ὁ Θεος καὶ ὁ Κυριος Ἰησους Χριστος, καὶ τὸ Πνευμα τοῦ Ἁγίου. *Basil. ii. p. 358.* The threefold doxology used as we use it appears in the *Constitutiones Apostolicæ*, a work of the second century. *Bull. p. 49.* Τίς οὐν οὐκ ἀν ἀπορησάμ λεγοντάς Θεον Πατέρα, καὶ Υἱον Θεον, καὶ Πνευμα Ἁγίον, δακνυντάς αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ ἑνώσει δυνάμιν, καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν ἀκουσάς ἀδελφούς καλούμενους. *Athenagoras (A. D. 177.) ad calc. Just. Mart.* Cyprian, about the middle of the second century, says, “Si baptizari quis apud hæreticos potuit, — templum Dei factus est, Quæro cujus Dei? Si Creatoris? Non potuit qui in eum non credit. Si Christi? Nec hujus fieri templum qui negat Deum Christum. Si Spiritus Sancti? *Cum Tres Unum sint,* quomodo Spiritus Sanctus ei placatus esse potest, qui aut Patris, aut Filii inimicus est? *Bull. Jud. Eccl. Cath. 309.*

Ἐρρωσθαι ὑμᾶς, εὐχομεθα ἀδελφοὶ στοιχοῦντες τῷ κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον λόγῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· μεθ’ οὗ, δόξα τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ, καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, &c. *Smyrncorum Ep. de Martyrio Polycarpi. Bul. Def. Fid. Nic. lv. §. 13.* The doxology of the disciples of St. Ignatius is to the same purport. That the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead was taught by the primitive Christians is evident also from the *Philopatris*, (ascribed to Lucian about A. D. 170.) where a Christian is introduced as teaching whom men are to worship, in these words: Ὑψιμεδόντα Θεον, μέγαν, ἀμβρότον, οὐρανίαν, υἱὸν Πατρὸς, Πνευμα ἐκ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, ἐν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς τρία· ταῦτα νο-

for greatly as they value human discernment in themselves, they are not much disposed to admit, that those whose evidence makes against them deserve attention. Though so short was the interval between the days of the Apostles and those Fathers, that it is impossible but the latter must have well known, what that was which the former taught. But we need not to rely on human opinion. God's own word is sufficient support for the true Christian faith. Only let us remember, that it is not necessary for us to comprehend all that, which is proposed to our belief. Whatsoever the divine word declares, it is our bounden duty to receive it. Were all that relates to the Godhead designed for our full comprehension, there would be no meaning in that expression which we find in Scripture, of "the secret things of God." It is impossible that we should

μὴτε Ζηνα, τοῦδε ἡγού Θεον. This was designed to be a ridicule of the received faith of Christians in that early time. "The supreme, immortal, great, celestial God; "the Son of the Father, the Spirit proceeding from the "Father; one of three, and three of one," &c.

penetrate the *whole* depth of such mysteries, as he has thought fit to unfold only in part. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are revealed, some partially, some entirely. The former are a perpetual exercise of our faith : the latter of our obedience. “ The secret things belong to the Lord our God ; but those things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law^k. ”

^k Deut. xxix. 29.

SERMON III.

ON THE GODHEAD OF CHRIST.

COLOS. ii. 9.

*In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead
bodily.*

THE text now recited, is one which bears full upon that article of the Unitarians which comes next under consideration; an article in direct opposition to this, and to very many similar passages. This Scripture teaches the actual Godhead of the Son, and his coequality with the Father; and these, together with the doctrine of the atonement made by him, are denied by the followers of Unitarianism in the following terms ^a. They believe that our blessed Lord “ Jesus Christ was a proper

^a Belsham, v. 2.

“ human being, *in all respects* like unto “ his brethren;” though they acknowledge him to have been the greatest of prophets, and the promised Messiah; who was “ sent “ to supersede the Mosaic institute, and to “ introduce a new and more liberal dispensation; and to reveal the doctrine of “ eternal life by a resurrection from the “ dead.” They believe his miracles, prophecies, resurrection, and ascension.

With this sort of profession of positive belief, such as it is, which derogates so essentially from the dignity of our Almighty Saviour, they deny that most important doctrine of the atonement made by him^b; and they disclaim that, which they plainly, though falsely, insinuate that Christians hold, “^c a subordinate Creator and Governor of the universe.”

I ought perhaps to apologize for the utterance of such doctrines as these within these walls, consecrated to the God of our Fathers, the one God in three Persons; were it not necessary to state

^b Belsham, x. 4.

^c Ib. ix. 2.

them, in order to their refutation; and I should have been unwilling to lay them before such of my congregation, as may be altogether unpractised in the question, were it not, that it seems better for them to hear these things now stated, together with a scriptural reply to them, than that they should be left to the hazard of stumbling upon them, unprepared, and unguarded.

The first assertion to be here disproved is, that our Saviour was a mere human being! Horrible it is to hear such a thing asserted, in a country which enjoys the full light of that revealed word, whereby his Godhead is so distinctly proved. Yet we have heard that this is asserted in the words which I just now cited; words which lose none of their impiety by the subsequent admission of Christ's divine mission, and of his authority as the chief of the prophets; for surely none is ignorant that the difference between God and his creatures is so infinite, that no exaltation of the latter can possibly raise them to any thing approaching to the former.

We hold with all Christians—for that is a strange Christianity which denies it—we hold, that our Lord Jesus Christ “^d is the “very and eternal God, of one substance “with the Father;” and we thus proceed to establish that assertion by the inspired word of God.

For in this matter there is no conviction to be obtained from mere argument. Reasoning can do nothing in this case, farther than to prove the authenticity of the scriptural assertions, which plainly and distinctly mark our blessed Redeemer as the only-begotten Son, coeternal, and coequal, and one in identity of essence and deity with the Father. It must never be lost from our sight, that the mystery of three Persons in one God can never be explained, because it can never be understood by man. There is therefore no other proof on this part of our controversy, and there can be no other, than the recorded word of him whose word is truth. With that we must rest satisfied. Upon that we may

^d XXXIX Articles, Art. 2.

rely in entire confidence and security. Abandoning therefore ^cin great measure the weapons of human warfare, the powers of abstract reasoning, and argument, our weapon must almost solely be “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

It is, I believe, admitted by every one, that the title of Lord of hosts, as it stands in our Bibles, belongs *exclusively* to the one Almighty God, to him who has expressly declared, that his glory he will not give to another. If therefore we find that the Person mentioned by that appellation is the Person of Jesus Christ, it will follow of necessity that he is the Almighty God. And moreover, since there is but one Lord of hosts, and that incommunicable name is applied both to the Father and to the Son, it must also follow, that the Father and the Son, two Persons, are one and the same God.

Now St. John affirms concerning Christ, “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” But what

^c John xii. 47.

is it which **Esaias** there says? “^e Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” A little farther onward, the same Lord of hosts utters those very words, ‘which St. John had been quoting when he made that reference to **Isaiah**. The Apostle therefore plainly declares, that the words spoken by the Lord of hosts were spoken by Christ; and therefore Christ must be the Lord of hosts; and as such, one with the Father; to whom, as God, that name exclusively belongs.

The Saviour is also a name which God takes exclusively to himself: “^g I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour.” “^h Thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no Saviour besides me.” Notwithstanding this, St. Peter applies the title to Christ: “ⁱ Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” So do the angels at his nativity: “^k To you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” St. Paul re-

^e Isa. vi. 5.

^g Isaiah xliii. 11.

ⁱ 2 Pet. iii. 4.

^f Isaiah vi. 9, 10.

^h Hosea xiii. 4.

^k Luke ii. 11.

peatedly does the same; for instance, in his Epistle to Titus: “^lThrough preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of our God and Saviour.” But we know *that* commission to have been given to St. Paul by Christ himself. To these might be added a multitude of instances, wherein the term Saviour, which also is peculiarly appropriated to God, has been applied in his word to Christ, in such a manner that the application cannot be evaded.

In the 78th Psalm^m it is said, “They tempted and provoked the most high God.” St. Paul, alluding to this, says, “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted.” Christ therefore is the same with the most high God; the same in power and Godhead; and there is but one God, as this same Apostle shews^o, though the Person of Christ is distinctly marked, as separate from that of the Father. The Apostle says to the Hebrews

^l Titus i. 3.

ⁿ 1 Cor. x. 9.

^m Psal. lxxviii. 56.

^o 1 Cor. viii. 4.

also, in the opening of the Epistle, that by Christ God made the worlds^o: that worship, which is God's due solely, is due to Christ^p: that God gives the name of God, and ascribes everlasting supremacy and dominion to Christ^q: that he was from the beginning, and shall be to the end, the eternal Creator, and Almighty Lord^r. The Prophet Malachi most plainly shews, that the temple, which, as every one knows, signified among the Jews the temple of God alone, was the temple of Christ who was to come^s. Therefore Christ, who is the Lord there mentioned, was also the Lord of that temple; the same God who was therein worshipped^t. Our Saviour himself asserts “^uI and my Father are “one.” And it ought to be remarked that his expression is very particular; specifying two Persons, and uniting them in one Godhead, or one nature; for the distinction lies in the Personality; the

^o Heb. i. 2.

^p Heb. i. 6.

^q Heb. i. 8,

^r Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

^s Mal. iii. 1.

^t See Bp. Horsley. Sermon xxx.

^u John x. 30. *Εγώ και ὁ Πατήρ ἐν εσμεν.*

Unity, in the Godhead; to which belongs the power which he is in that place vindicating to himself. Our Saviour also asserts, “^x I am in the Father, and the Father in me;” and St. Paul says the same, “^y God was in Christ, reconciling “the world unto himself.” The union of Godhead with the distinction of Person are here most plainly marked.

St. Paul, and with him all the Apostles, and all Christians after him, hold; “^z to us “there is but one God, the Father.” St. Thomas, before the face of the Apostles, and on a most remarkable occasion, calls Christ “^a My Lord, and my God;” which title he accepts, and no one present expresses the slightest surprise or disapprobation at it. What does this prove, but that Christ and the Father were held by the Apostles for one and the same God?

The divine worship also which Christ admitted from his disciples and others decidedly proves the same: for it was ad-

^x John xiv. 11.

^y 2 Cor. v. 19.

^z 1 Cor. viii. 6.

^a John xx. 28.

mitted by him, who himself declared,
 “^b Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,
 “ and him only shalt thou serve.”

In that prophecy of Isaiah, “which no one ever dreamed of applying to any other than Christ, the child to be born is styled, “The mighty God” and “The everlasting Father,” as well as “The Prince of Peace.” He is often enough distinguished in respect of Personality, as the Son; and therefore, it is only in Godhead that he is the same with the Father. St. John tells us of Jesus Christ, “^dThis is the “true God, and eternal life:” and St. Paul again, in the words of my present text, declares, that “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Our Saviour himself plainly asserted his Godhead very early in his ministry at Capernaum, (Matt. ix. 6. Mark ii. 10.) when, the Scribes having accused him of blasphemy for saying, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” he replied, that “the Son of man *hath*

^b Matt. iii. 10.

^c Isa. ix. 6.

^d 1 John v. 20. ΟΥΤΟΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΑΛΗΘΙΝΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ, &c.

“power on earth to forgive sins:” not drawing back from the act, but rejecting the charge of blasphemy; though it was an acknowledged thing, that none could forgive sins but God alone: which pointed to the manifest inference that He, the Son of man, *was* God. Our Saviour held three conferences with the Jews, in each of which he asserted, and they understood him to assert, his entire equality with the Father, as to actual Deity. The first is recorded in John v. 17, 18. “Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to slay him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but called God his Father^c, making himself equal with God.” The second is in John viii. 58. “Before Abraham was, I am.” Then took they up stones to cast at him.” This was the punishment for blasphemy, as appointed by the Law. The third is in John x. 23 — 30. where he concludes his discourse with the words

^c Πατέρα ἰδίον, his own Father.

lately cited: "I and my Father are one." Upon which the Jews again proceed to stone him, for the blasphemy which they conceived that he had uttered. Christ also declared himself the Son of man, to be Lord of the sabbath, which is God's sabbath day. (Matt. xii. 8.) Christ associated himself with the Father in terms of equality, John xiv. 23. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And again, as it were, to prove the perfect identity of the Father and the Son, "All things that the Father hath, are mine." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also^f."

^f See also John iii. 34, 35, 36. and v. 17, 18, 23. Heathens and Jews, in the early days of Christianity, both understood the Christian religion as teaching that Christ is God. The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, so often cited, states that the primitive Christians sang hymns to Christ *as God*. Julian, as cited by Cyril, shews that he understood St. John to teach Christ's proper Godhead. (See Whitaker's *Origin of Arianism*, p. 48, 49, 50 in note.) The Jews now understand the writings of the New Testament as teaching that Christ is very God, and they acknowledged of old that divine omnipotence and perfection were necessarily inherent in their

So correct is the declaration of that Creed, against which so indiscriminate an

Messiah, when they expressed so high indignation against our Saviour for taking to himself his name and office. The primitive Christians held that Christ is God, as appears in Justin Martyr, (A. D. 155.) in his Dialogue with Trypho. T. "As to your saying that "this Christ preexisted before all time, as God, and "then was born a man, and yet was not a man though "born of a man, it seems to me not only contradictory, "but absurd." J. "I know that this saying appears "contradictory to those of your nation, but I am able "to prove that the Son of the Creator preexisted as "God, and afterward was born of a virgin, *as man*." That the very first Christians prayed to Christ as God, is proved by Stephen's prayer to him expressly, at the moment of his death; a prayer for the remission of their sins, which God alone could remit, as was known and acknowledged by all.

Irenæus expressly asserts, that both the Father and the Son is God; and that none else is ever absolutely so called in the Scriptures. Lib. iii. cap. 6. That Christ is also God who spoke to Moses at the bush. Lib. iv. cap. 11. That God is wholly commensurate with Christ, and Christ with God. Lib. iv. cap. 8. See Bulli Def. Fid. Nic. cap. 5.

Clemens Alexandrinus also shews the Deity of Christ, and his identity with the Father. See Bull. ut sup. cap. 6.

That it was the belief of the Jews in the earliest times, that Christians *worshipped* Christ, is evident from their application at the martyrdom of Polycarp, that his

outcry is raised, that the right faith, neither confounds the person, nor divides the substance.

There are doubtless passages in the New Testament, which impute inferiority beneath the Father to the man Jesus: that is, inferiority beneath the Godhead, to the human nature: for Christ took it upon him completely and sincerely, with all its wants and its weaknesses. This was an essential part of his humiliation, that he should put on, and unite himself with, a real, proper, human soul and body. The distinction, whereby all those passages which ascribe inferiority to Jesus are applied to his human nature, is no invention of ours, nor of any other Church. Our Lord's declaration, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me;" and that,

body should not be given to the Christians, "lest, leaving him who had been crucified," (whom therefore they were then in the habit of worshipping,) "they should begin to worship this man;" Μη αφεντες τον εσταυρωμενον, τουτον αρχωνται σεβασδαι, &c. *Russell's Patres Apostol.* p. 360. §. xvii.

§ John vi. 38.

“^h My Father is greater than I;” the word of the Apostle, that “ⁱ the head of “ Christ is God;” and his own remarkable declaration of his ^k ignorance, as the Son of man, when the final judgment should come; are all easily reconciled with the foregoing passages, by understanding them as spoken of his human nature; which retained all its natural deficiencies, while the Godhead, as has been, and shall be yet more fully, shewn, resided in his divine Person in actual identity with the Deity of the Father. This distinction between the divine and human natures in Christ is plainly marked by St. Paul; “^l He (God) “ hath appointed a day wherein he shall “ judge the world in righteousness, by “^m (in) the man whom he hath ordained.” If this appellation, “ the man,” be thought any argument in favour of the unbeliever’s assertion, that Christ is “ a mere man;” how can they make that to agree with the expression of the Prophet Zechariah, who

^h John xiv. 28.ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 3.^k Mark xiii. 3.^l Acts xvii. 31.^m *Ev ανδρι*, &c.

calls that man the Almighty's fellow?
 " ⁿAwake, O sword, against my Shepherd,
 " and against the *man* that is *my fellow*,
 " saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shep-
 " herd, and the sheep shall be scattered."
 What *fellow* can the Lord of hosts have,
 except a second Person in the same in-
 communicable and incomprehensible God-
 head? " ^oThe supreme God," says a sound
 and excellent Divine, " who was mani-
 " fest in the flesh, and was in Christ re-
 " conciling the world to himself, shall re-
 " main in the same personal union with
 " him, till he has judged the world, and is
 " ready to deliver up the kingdom. God
 " will be present in the same Person with
 " our Judge, and therefore, the act of
 " judgment is ascribed indifferently to
 " both; either that God will judge the
 " world, or that we shall appear before the
 " judgment seat of Christ." The human
 infirmities and human passions which our
 Saviour shewed, when he hungered and

ⁿ Zechariah xiii. 7.

^o Jones, Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity: art. Divi-
 nity of Christ.

wept, are only proofs of the reality of his mortal nature; and are by no means inconsistent with such a union, as preserved the distinction between his two natures; but rather they are necessary consequences of it.

But there is yet a farther argument for the actual supreme Godhead of our Saviour, to be drawn from the Old Testament; though from want of due caution it has lost its proper force in our translation. And when we recollect the plain distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which the New Testament exhibits, this argument will go far to prove the identity of Godhead, without any confusion of Persons, in the Holy Trinity. *

It is a most remarkable fact, that in many prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly relate to the Son, our Saviour, he is called in the original language by the peculiar and incommunicable name *Jehovah*; though our translators seem often to have given way to the Jewish custom, of avoiding the mention of that sacred name, and have rendered it *the Lord*.

The Prophet Jeremiah speaks of the future kingdom of our Saviour upon earth, in these words : “^p I will raise unto David a “ righteous Branch, and a King shall reign “ and prosper. In his days Judah shall “ be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.” These expressions refer, without any shadow of doubt, to the future kingdom of the Messiah. Who that Messiah was to be, we learn from the original words, though not from the received translation, of the next following verse. “ And this is his “ name whereby he shall be called, Jeho- “ vah (not the Lord) our Righteousness.” The words of the Prophet Isaiah^q, which St. John quotes as uttered concerning Christ^r, and which have been already noticed, as proving that he is the Lord of hosts, prove moreover that the name *Jehovah* is his own name, and thereby strengthen their former evidence. The Prophet says, when, as the Apostle informs us, he saw Christ’s glory, and spake of him, not, “ I

^p Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

^q Isa. vi. 5.

^r John xii. 41.

“saw the Lord,” as we commonly read, but, “I saw Jehovah:” and the hymn of the angels to him is, “Holy, holy, holy,” not Lord God, but “Jehovah of hosts.” We might also insist on that triple expression of adoration; but since it is not a direct proof, though no bad presumptive evidence of the Trinity, when united with the others, I shall content myself with this mention of it. Isaiah also remarkably applies that highest of all names to Christ, in prophesying of his forerunner; “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way,” not of the Lord, but “of Jehovah.” St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans^t, when arguing for the necessity of calling upon Christ, cites the words of the Prophet Joel; as having solemnly declared the same thing. Let us see how those words stand in the language of the original prophecy. “^uAnd it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of *Jehovah* shall

^s Isa. xl. 3.

^t Rom. x. 12. See Bp. Horsley's 30th Sermon.

^u Joel ii. 32. English Bible. iii. 5. Hebrew Bible.

“ be delivered : for in mount Zion and in
“ Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as *Jehovah*
“ *vah* hath said, and in the remnant whom
“ *Jehovah* shall call.” Joel therefore, according to St. Paul’s view of his prophecy, means our Saviour Christ Jesus, when he there speaks of *Jehovah* ; and that name by which he does not scruple to call him, belongs to the one and true and Almighty God. The Unitarians profess to admit that Christ is the Messiah. How they can fairly avoid the conclusion that he is *Jehovah* also, it is difficult, if not impossible to shew.

St. John the beloved disciple, who has left us the fullest and best account of all which belongs to our Saviour’s divine nature, and of the doctrinal part of our religion, does not leave us without his evidence on this point of the Godhead of Christ. He lived longer than the other Apostles, and saw the heresy of Cerinthus, and others, who taught doctrines not much unlike to those of the Socinians and modern Unitarians on this point. Such an Apostle, living at such a period, opens his

Gospel with a direct assertion of the eternal preexistence of Christ, in unity of power, and identity of essence and of Godhead, with the Father. To the Word, which expression unquestionably denotes Christ, he there distinctly attributes the act of creation; which the book of Genesis as distinctly attributes to God; but by a *plural* name, a circumstance of which St. John and every Jew must have been well aware. In the second chapter also, that book of Genesis continuing the account of the creation, which the Apostle ascribes to Christ, says, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created; in the day that," not the Lord God, as in our version, but, "Jehovah Gods made the earth and the heavens," &c. That incommunicable singular name is here, and in many other places, coupled with the word *Gods* in the plural number; which teaches plainly enough, that the peculiar name of the supreme God belongs to all the Persons included in the Trinity, though the Godhead be Unity itself.

There seems indeed to be no other fair and rational way of accounting for so unusual a form of speech; and it does not appear to be possible to shew any other, without imputing error to the words of him who is absolute perfection in every thing.

St. John declares in his Gospel, that “[†]The Word was in the beginning.” It could hardly have been thought, that any one would seriously maintain, as has been done on the Socinian side of the question, that this signifies the beginning only of the creation, when the Apostle goes on to say, that “the Word was with God, and the “*Word was God*” in the beginning; and afterwards, that “all things were made “by him.” St. John’s assertion, therefore, of the eternity of the Word, and of the creation of all things by him, with that of St. Paul, “[†]By whom also he made the worlds;” and others, to the same effect, afford the only explanation of the use of a plural word, as a name of the Almighty Creator. The fruitless attempts of the

[†] John i. 1.

[†] Heb. i. 2.

Unitarians to alter the version of this last passage, prove indeed that they feel its true and proper sense to be directed immediately against their doctrine. That great work of creation was performed by Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, and especially, as we have seen, by the second Person; to whom, therefore, the name of Jehovah must of necessity belong.

I need not here enter upon the identity of the Holy Ghost in Godhead with the Father and the Son, because that is made a separate article by the Unitarian, and will be separately discussed in these discourses.

St. John clearly asserts, that “the Word” performed that, which in the book of Genesis is ascribed to Jehovah; and he afterwards shews, that by the Word he means our Blessed Saviour; when he says, “^z The Word was made flesh, and “dwelt among us.” Similar to this is also the language of St. Paul; “^a Without “controversy great is the mystery of God-

^z Ἐσκηνοόσεν, pitched his tent; i. e. he took that flesh as a covering. John i. 14.

^a 1 Tim. iii. 16.

“liness, God was manifest in the flesh :” expressions which, used as they are by those Apostles, can apply only to our Saviour in his incarnate state.

And here it seems proper to notice the insinuation, that we teach a “subordinate Creator and Governor of the universe.” For it is plainly insinuated by the Unitarian, ^b when he in a pointed manner disclaims that doctrine, while shewing the particulars of dissent in their party from our faith.

The Church of England holds, that the Son is the second Person in the Godhead, which Godhead is throughout infinite in all perfections; and so therefore are all the three Persons alike. Of infinity we cannot, from the very constitution of our nature, frame any distinct conception; but it is essential to all the peculiar properties of God. He is infinite in goodness, in power, in wisdom, in all his attributes. Therefore no humble Christian, no reasonable man, will expect that limited and im-

^b Belsham, ix. 2.

perfect natures, like ours, should be capable of comprehending those unbounded properties. Omnipotence is infinity of power. We hold, and we must hold, that it is fully possessed by the whole Godhead, and by every Person therein alike; because all the three Persons are but one in Godhead; and Omnipotence is its attribute.

Far be it from me however to attempt an explanation of this sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity, "farther than the very text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand." The attempt to illustrate by similitudes has often been made, but it must be made with extreme caution. Our images must all be drawn from things with which we are acquainted; things of the visible creation, and therefore imperfect: and there is manifest danger of our applying in some degree that imperfection, which can hardly be separated from such things in our minds, to that Being who partakes not of it at all. His nature, as being absolutely perfect, must in our pre-

* Martyr's Letters, p. 64.

sent stage of existence be absolutely incomprehensible; and equally so in regard to his infinity, whether we consider him in Unity or in Trinity. Of infinity we can have no more than a negative idea, namely, that it has no bounds; but its positive properties, whatever they be, are beyond our utmost conception.

The attempt to simplify an avowed mystery, however soothing to human presumption, is a mischievous attempt. It may lead us to some doctrine intelligible to our comprehensions; but it is almost, if not altogether certain, that it will lead us astray from the truth^d. That Christ our Lord was, and is, and always shall be the most high God, together and equally with the Father, is the faith of Christians; and this, without any attempt to bring it down to the level of our understandings, has, I trust,

^d Admirably has this been urged by a great and excellent writer of our Church, whose humility all may well emulate, though few can vie with the profundity of his learning, or the acuteness of his understanding: Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* v. 51, 2, 3, 4. &c. See note ^e, page 36.

been abundantly proved by the word of Scripture itself. We might and we do add the testimony of that voice from heaven which called our Lord, God's *beloved* Son, at his baptism and transfiguration, to shew that he is not called *The* Son merely as *holy men* have been called sons of God. We might and do challenge our adversaries to produce an instance of the application of that title, or of the "only begotten Son^c," to any mere mortal. We might and do argue from the first of these passages, that he who had yet done nothing remarkable, was called "the beloved Son," in regard to his antecedent relation to the Father; to which he himself, just before he suffered, referred. "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee *before the world was*." Lastly, we appeal to our Lord's own direct and unequivocal words; "Before Abraham was, I am;" an expression which is not to be smothered by talk-

^c Luke iii. 22.

^f John iv. 9. See Noelli Catechismus in Enchirid. Theol. p. 97. ^g John xvii. 5. ^h John viii. 58.

ing of preexistence in the Divine purpose ; an expression which not only claims existence before Abraham, but the property of self-existence, of never ceasing to be, of being He to whom all time is presentⁱ. And so the Jews understood it; for they took up stones to put him to death for blasphemy, “because,” said they, “thou, “being a man, makest thyself God^k.” Did he then retract, or explain away his expression? No. He justified it, and shewed that he was entitled to the name of *The Son of God* in a peculiar manner; far beyond those who are called children of God on account of their holiness, or of the gift of inspiration which was upon them. And that Person, who made that claim to Godhead, was he who received miraculous testimony by a voice from heaven, that God was well pleased with him. Could God be well pleased with an impostor and

ⁱ An expression by which he claims the right of bearing that peculiar name by which God designated himself to Moses; “Say unto the children of Israel, *I am* “hath sent me unto you.” Exod. iii. 14.

^k John x. 33.

blasphemer? The question requires no answer.

When the high priest adjured our Lord by the living God, which was the regular form of a judicial oath, to tell "whether he were the Christ, *the* Son of God," he asserted that he was: for besides that St. Mark declares explicitly, "Jesus said, I am;" the corresponding expression, "Thou hast said," was evidently a decided assent. And the Jews acted upon it *as such*, and punished him for blasphemy: not for making himself the greatest of prophets, but for making himself God.

The Godhead of our Saviour being thus established from the incontrovertible word of Holy Scripture; for I have declined making use of the opinions held by the Fathers of the Christian Church, in its earliest and most incorrupt times; because, strongly as they bear testimony to it, and greatly as their testimony deserves to be esteemed, our opponents protest against any authority of man: the Godhead of the Son being established from the word of God himself, it remains that we notice

the Unitarian's denial of the Atonement made by Christ¹. For if they could set aside his Godhead, there would be an end at once to the doctrine of a sacrifice made by him to atone for the sins of all mankind. “^mNo *man* can by any means “redeem his brother, nor give to God a “ransom for him.” Therefore they seek to degrade our Lord to a mere man, “in “all respects like unto his fellows.” But the falsehood of that blasphemy has been shewn; and we will now proceed, lest the argument should seem to be defective on a point of so great importance, shortly to prove the most comfortable and important doctrine of the Atonement from the words of Scripture.

But, first, it may not be improper to no-

¹ This is truly to us the very life of the question. And it would have afforded large ground indeed for discourse at present, did I not feel myself deterred by the complete and masterly discussion which it has already received from far abler hands. I shall therefore only notice it shortly in this place, observing that it depends on the decision of the Unitarian's question as to the actual Godhead of Christ.

^m Psalm xlix. 7.

tice the prevalence of idea of an atonement for offences throughout the world. Vicarious sacrifice has been, from the beginning, the practice of all people alike. Now reason could not have taught, that the death of a brute should have any efficacy to make atonement for the sins of man; for there is no reason whatever in the thing itself, why it should work that effect. Neither can it be imagined, as the Apostle argues, “ⁿ that the blood of bulls and of “ goats should take away sin.” The practice must have been of positive institution; and we read of it as such so early as the sacrifice of Abel. Nor is there any way to account for that institution, except as a type of him who was to be the one great sacrifice, whose death was to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. Our Lord himself says, “^o The Son of man “ came to give his life *a ransom* for many.” Thus, in the institution of the holy sacrament of his body and blood, he says, “^p This is my blood of the new testament,

ⁿ Heb. x. 4. ^o Matth. xx. 28. ^p Ibid. xxvi. 28.

“ which is shed for many *for the remission*
 “ *of sins;*” and this is his own declaration,
 and made with all possible solemnity. In
 the Acts of the Apostles, we find St. Paul¹
 declaring, that it was the blood of Christ
 which had purchased us: “ Take heed
 “ unto yourselves, and to all the flock over
 “ which the Holy Ghost hath made you
 “ overseers, to feed the Church of God,
 “ which he hath *purchased with his own*
 “ *blood.*” To the Romans he declares,
 that “² God spared not his own Son, but
 “ delivered him up *for us all.*” To the
 Galatians, “³ Christ hath *redeemed us from*
 “ *the curse of the Law, being made a*
 “ *curse for us.*” Redemption to mankind
 is declared to be the consequence, not of
 any purer doctrine which he taught, but
 of his being made a curse for us in his cru-
 cifixion; that is to say, our salvation is the
 consequence of his sacrifice of Atonement.
 To Timothy St. Paul declares, ⁴ that Jesus
 Christ “ gave *himself* a *ransom* for all;”

¹ Acts xx. 28.² Rom. viii. 32.³ Gal. iii. 13.⁴ Tim. ii. 5.

and to the Hebrews, that they “^a are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.” St. John, in his first Epistle, tells us, that “^a the blood of Jesus Christ his (God’s) Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

“^r Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This was typically shewn in the Old Law; and abundant proof has been given from the New, and it might, if necessary, be multiplied tenfold, to shew that the sacrifice of Atonement made by our blessed Saviour is that, to which all the typical sacrifices and atonements of the Mosaic Law refer. The matter, though concisely treated, has been even here abundantly established^z.

It has, I trust, been clearly, though

^a Heb. x. 10.

^a John i. 7.

^r Heb. ix. 22.

^z The whole argument belonging to this question may be seen, as it is most fully and powerfully discussed by Dean Magee, in his excellent work “On Atonement and Sacrifice.” He fully demonstrates the fallacy of the whole Unitarian system, and especially of the artifices by which they seek to do away the Christian doctrine. There is not space for me to enter farther into the question at present, nor do I think it needful so to do.

shortly proved, that our Blessed Saviour is *not* “a proper human being in all respects “like unto his fellows;” but Very God, of one substance with the Father. It has been proved, that he did *not* come down, and much less was he created, “to supersede the Mosaic institute, and introduce “a new and more liberal dispensation;” and that he did *not* come merely to “reveal the doctrine of eternal life by a resurrection from the dead.” These were consequences, not causes of his coming; and they arose out of the grand object, his sacrifice of Atonement and Propitiation.

We cannot, and God forbid that we ever should, give up, for the idle fancies of mortal vanity, the express declarations of the inspired word of God. We cannot so make shipwreck of our faith, and only hope. Rather let us ever hold fast that corner stone of our faith. Rather let us join with the saints above in glorifying thee our Omnipotent Redeemer; “^a for thou “wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God

^a Rev. v. 9, 12, 13.

“ *through thy blood.*” And let us say in the words of their hymn, “ Worthy is the
 “ Lamb that was slain, to receive power,
 “ and riches, and wisdom, and strength,
 “ and honour, and glory, and blessing.—
 “ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and
 “ power, be unto him that sitteth upon the
 “ throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and
 “ ever.”

SERMON IV.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

JOHN xvi. 13.

When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

THE words which I have just now recited seem to imply, in their natural and obvious sense, that which comes next to be proved in maintaining the Catholic faith, and therein that of our own Church, against the tenets of Unitarians. They, the Unitarians, utterly deny the existence of the Holy Ghost, as a Person in the Holy Trinity. Still do they endeavour, upon this point also, through an artifice similar to that which was noticed in the preceding discourse, to raise against our Church the prejudices of those, who hold *together with*

us the Unity of the Deity, by a misstatement of the question. They assert, as if it were in opposition to the Church of England, that “^a Unitarians do not believe “ in the Personal existence of the Holy Spirit, *as a Being distinct from the “ Supreme.*” But neither do we, nor yet does any other Christian Church maintain such a belief. The fair statement of the point under discussion would have been, to have left out the latter part of the sentence, and to have declared merely their disbelief of the Personality of the Holy Spirit; for that is the whole of our doctrine in this matter to which their denial applies.

In discussing questions of such infinite importance, it is much to be desired that the spirit of party should be carefully restrained; that it should not induce us to hazard assertions, or at least insinuations so plain that they cannot be misunderstood, though they be utterly groundless; in the hope of bringing discredit on the

^a Belsham, x. 3.

cause of the opponents. It was necessary, in my last discourse also, to direct our attention to the same sort of conduct, in regard to the question of our blessed *Saviour's* Godhead; where, by disclaiming the doctrine of "a subordinate Creator" and Governor of the universe," the Unitarian's advocate has manifestly charged us with maintaining it.

The same has been done, and in the same covert way of insinuation here also, with regard to the Personality of the Holy Ghost. They do not believe him to be possessed of "*Personal* existence." This we do believe; and thus far the question is brought fairly under discussion. But then other matter is introduced, as a conclusion to this profession of disbelief; namely, that they do not acknowledge his *Personal* existence, "*as a Being distinct from the Supreme.*" Neither *do we* now, nor *did we ever* teach this. There can be no doubt, that he who should teach or believe, that the Son and Holy Ghost are Gods separate

^b Belsham's Letters to the Bishop of London.

and distinct from the Father, *would* teach or believe Tritheism; whereas the Church of England positively declares, as her first article, that there is but one God. But we teach the existence of three Persons *in* that one Godhead; though we feel that this mystery is not clearly explained to us, and are contented to acknowledge it as one of the secret things which “belong to the “Lord our God.” We do not presume to assign limits to that Godhead which surpasses all our comprehension. We do not pretend to be wise above that measure which the Almighty has allotted to us. We are contented to believe, even without understanding them, those things which pass man’s understanding; and to rest satisfied, in this life, with that which is revealed: believing it, as a mystery which we cannot hope to unravel; and believing just so much, as it has pleased the Lord to unfold to our mortal capacities, concerning that divine nature, which no human faculties can thoroughly comprehend. To attempt more than this would be presumption. To refuse so much were disobedience.

ence and infidelity. *How* these things are so, we do not therefore in the smallest degree pretend to explain ; but that they are so, has in part *been* shewn, and shall now be farther proved from the Scriptures themselves : and that is the best of all proof.

That all Godhead, which comprehends all its attributes, resides in the Father, is not in dispute. That it resides also, and equally, in the Son, was shewn in the last discourse. That it resides in precisely the same degree in the Holy Ghost, as a separate Person in the divine Trinity, comes now to be proved from the same unquestionable authority. The first passage which shall be mentioned to that purpose is my present text ; “ *c* When *he* the “ Spirit of truth is come, *he* will guide “ you into all truth.” We have here a form of speaking which indicates Personality, if it indicates any thing. The expression is evidently intentional, and marks the purpose for which it is employed. The

c John xvi. 13.

Spirit of truth is, as we know, in the Greek of the neuter gender. The regular mode of expression in any language, would have been, not *he*, but *it*, the Spirit of truth, if the Spirit were merely an attribute of a Person. The masculine gender is however substituted for the neuter in the original language^d, where it is most important : for in this particular translations prove nothing on either side. *He* therefore is used here ; *he*, the masculine gender, expressly to mark the Personality of the Holy Spirit. The same is the case in other passages ; “ The Spirit of truth *whom*,” denoting Personality in the same manner, “ whom the world cannot receive :” “ Even the Spirit of truth, *who* proceedeth from the Father.” A form of speech so unusual

^d Εκανος το πνευμα της αληθειας.

^e John xiv. 17.

^f John xv. 26. “ The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,—he shall teach you all things.” xiv. 26. “ If I depart I will send him unto you.” xvi. 7. “ He will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me,” &c. xvi. 13, &c.

must have been employed for some sufficient purpose, which it was peculiarly calculated to effect: for to suppose any inaccuracy or oversight in God's word, is to suppose imperfection in God himself; which is both impious and impossible. Since then that form of speech must have been employed intentionally, there must also be a peculiar signification in it, and it is for the Unitarians to shew what be its peculiar import, if it be not that here maintained. St. Peter's discourse to Ananias, immediately preceding the judgment which was inflicted on him, is an express mention of the Person of the Holy Ghost, distinctly *as God*: “^s Why hath Satan
“ filled thine heart to lie to the Holy
“ Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men,
“ but unto God.” St. Paul says to the Romans, “^h The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.” We have *not* here indeed the expression of the Spirit *himself*, to mark Personality, but we find it to be indicated with abundant plainness by the

^s Acts v. 3, 4.

^h Rom. viii. 26.

whole tenor of the Apostle's expression in this place. For surely the act of making intercession implies Personality in him who makes it : since it cannot be said, that the spirit of a person, meaning a part of himself, intercedes with the rest of himself for the pardon of offenders. God's Spirit, mentioned in that sense which the opponents of the Trinity would put upon the word, might *be* moved, might *be* affected. But it could not be the active agent towards God. It could not move him to do nor to forbear any thing ; for that is the office of a distinct Person, the Person of the Holy Ghost. With the same distinction, the Prophet Isaiah also speaks : “ⁱ And “ now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath “ sent me.” Here is a manifest distinction of Persons, though not any division of Godhead. The Father, and his Spirit, are both particularly named. We could not, consistently with the common rules of language, say of a man, that a person and his spirit had done any thing. The spirit

ⁱ Isaiah xlviii. 16.

of a man is himself; not only without division, but without distinction. But here is a distinction between the Father and *his* Spirit; such as belongs not to human nature; but such as does, however incomprehensibly, belong to the Deity^k. Many more texts might easily be collected upon this point, in which acts of power and dominion are imputed personally to the Holy Spirit; and I have selected only some of those which seem to me to mark the distinction of Persons most plainly; because I would, previous to going farther into that evidence, notice the evasion which is evidently prepared in the expressions by which the Unitarians deny the Personality

^k “ We ought to recollect, that while with regard to
“ the Holy Spirit, the ordinary current phraseology of
“ Scripture is framed on the supposition of his Person-
“ ality, this is not the case with any thing else, which,
“ although occasionally personified, is not a person.
“ In other cases, the language of personification is the
“ exception to the general phraseology. But in this
“ case it is quite the reverse. Any expressions that
“ seem inconsistent with Personality form the excep-
“ tion, the general complexion of the language being
“ all in its favour.” *Wardlaw, Sermons on the Socinian Controversy*, p. 289.

of the Holy Ghost. They acknowledge that God himself “¹ is sometimes designated by the expression, the Spirit of God. But they conceive, that the sense in which the phrase occurs most frequently in the New Testament, is that of miraculous gifts and powers, with which the Apostles and primitive converts were endowed in the first age of the Church.” That those, and other synonymous words, are *sometimes* so used, both in the Old and New Testaments, is not what I mean to dispute. But it is not to be said, that such is their constant, nor yet their most usual signification. The passages which have already been cited, and others also, perhaps even stronger and more explicit than some of them are, cannot be so interpreted; but prove that the Holy Ghost has a distinct Personality, in the same Godhead with the Father and the Son; and those gifts and powers, which are mentioned as the Spirit of God, are *gifts* of the Holy Spirit. They are not on

¹ Belsham, p. 10.

that account the less the gifts of God ; because his Person is in the Godhead, and whatever he does, is done by God, exactly in the same degree as if it were performed by the Father or the Son. God is not divisible ; and though there be a *distinction* of Persons, yet is there an absolute and perfect Unity of nature in him. The Unitarians have in this point drawn near to the spirit of the Sabellian heresy ; for it held that the Son was an emanation from the Father, but not a distinct Person ; and here we find that much the same is maintained concerning the Holy Ghost.

That the Holy Ghost is not however in Scripture described as an Energy of the Father, nor yet as signifying miraculous gifts and powers conferred on the primitive Christians, shall shortly be shewn from the word of God. But even the reason of the thing, Reason, their own boasted weapon, in which the Unitarians so put their trust, will prove the contrary. For if it be only an operation of God, the Holy Spirit can possess no *active* powers. If it be merely the operation of sending forth power to

work miracles, then whenever that operation was suspended for a time, the Holy Ghost ceased for a time to be; and has now ceased altogether to exist. So that by that hypothesis it would appear, that there is now no Holy Spirit acting in the world, nor influencing the thoughts and actions of man! The deniers of his Personal existence must therefore fall back from that position, and instead of interpreting the expression, as if it signified only miraculous gifts and powers, must take shelter in the doctrine of its *always* signifying that, which we allow to be its signification in *some certain* places; namely, the Spirit of God, in some such sense as we say the spirit of a man; or as an energy, or quality of God. But when we see such acts of substantial personality ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as are often ascribed to him in the word of God, how is it *then* possible to understand of him otherwise, than that he is a Substance, or Hypostasis, or Person? When we find him opposed to evil spirits, as persons, it is manifest that he also must be understood to be such: as when it is

said, (1 Sam. xvi. 14.) “ the Spirit of the
“ Lord departed from Saul, and an evil
“ spirit from the Lord troubled him.”
This evil spirit was a person, similar to
that (2 Chron. xviii. 20.) which “ came
“ out, and stood before the Lord,” to per-
suade Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth
Gilead : and so therefore was the Holy
Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord, which left
Saul, when the other came to possess him.
In the account of the creation, which was
unquestionably the work of God, we find
nevertheless the Holy Spirit, as well as the
Son, acting as distinct Persons, (Gen i. 2.)
“ The Spirit of God moved upon the face
“ of the waters.” He brooded over them,
as a bird over her young ; for that is the
accurate signification of the Hebrew word,
(מרחפת,) and that certainly describes the
agency, not of a quality or attribute of the
Father, but of a distinct Person. The ex-
pression of the Prophet Isaiah, (xlviii. 16.)
“ And now the Lord God, *and* his Spirit,
“ hath sent me unto thee,” marks the Spi-
rit for a distinct Person from the Father.
So also the same Prophet, (lix. 19, 20.)

“ When the enemy shall come in like a
 “ flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up
 “ a standard against him. And the Re-
 “ deemer shall come to Zion, and unto
 “ them that turn from transgression in Ja-
 “ cob, saith the Lord.” And here he dis-
 tinguished the Holy Ghost as a Person,
 not as an energy or attribute; as one to
 whom, as to the Son and Redeemer, a
 particular and distinct office is assigned.
 Thus does the word even of the Old Tes-
 tament afford manifest testimony to the
 Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Let us however see what ground they
 have for asserting, that “ the Spirit, in the
 “ *New Testament*, most frequently denotes
 “ only gifts and powers.” The converts
 at Ephesus, who are mentioned in the 19th
 chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, had
 been converted, as it seems, in no very
 perfect manner, to the Christian faith.
 They could not but have heard of the
 miraculous *gifts* and *powers* which the
 preachers of those days possessed. But
 the mystery of the Trinity had not been
 made known to them. *Therefore* they pro-

fessed utter ignorance of the Holy Ghost's existence. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." They could not deny, that they had heard of miraculous gifts and powers in the Church at that time, because they were by no means uncommon: and had that been all which the Holy Spirit signified, had that been the usual meaning of the name, they could not possibly have remained ignorant of that meaning. But they seem to have been converted to *John's* baptism only, without an explanation of the *full Christian* doctrine. Now John no where, so far as we have any knowledge or ground of conjecture, taught any thing respecting the Holy Ghost; except when he bare record, ^m that the resting of the Spirit upon Christ was a peculiar indication that he was the Lamb of God; and there indeed he spoke of a bodily and personal appearance then before his eyes. *His* doctrine was, as St. Paul here says, repentance and belief on him who should

^m John i. 33.

come afterward: that is, on Christ Jesus. If the Holy Ghost had signified only miraculous gifts, the disciples at Ephesus must have heard of them; for they were then well known to reside in the Christian Church. But since that name denoted one of the Persons in that Trinity, whom it was not *John's* office to preach, those disciples had heard nothing of him. Had they been baptized to our Saviour's baptism, the case would have been otherwise; and St. Paul's question implies it; "Unto what *then* were ye baptized?" For in that case they *must* have learned the Holy Ghost equally with the Father and the Son.

"ⁿ Jesus," says the Evangelist, "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness." Is the Spirit here only gifts and powers? "^o Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the *Holy Ghost*" (literally the ^p Spirit, the Holy One) "descended in a *bodily shape* like a

ⁿ Matt. iv. 1.

^o Luke iii. 21.

^p Το πνεῦμα το ἅγιον.

“dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” I have cited this passage at length, because it is a most remarkable manifestation of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity at the same time: the voice of the Father from heaven; the Son incarnate upon earth; and the Holy Ghost in a bodily representation in the air. It cannot here be said, that the Holy Ghost means merely miraculous powers; for besides the remarkable distinction of Person which the original language marks, “the Spirit, the “Holy One,” there was a *visible appearance*; and no mention is made, at that time, of any endowment with miraculous powers. ^a If men find it convenient to

^a St. Paul says, “The Spirit searcheth all things, “even the deep things of God.” This then is no description of the power of God. (See Pearson, Art. VIII.) If the Holy Ghost were not a Person, he could not be blasphemed; (see Pearson, *ib.*) and that the Holy Ghost is not the same as the Father or the Son, is shewn in the same place. He “*proceedeth from the “Father.*” John xv. 26. “He shall receive of *mine.*” John xvi. 14. “If I go not away, the Comforter will

fancy a thing, in order that they may build upon it a system of faith, or rather of unbelief, they do so at their own peril. Only let them not say that the New Testament warrants their dangerous and presumptuous imaginations. Let them not talk of doing things in a figure, as one of the ^rleaders of Unitarianism does, in regard to our Saviour's death and atonement. Wherever the words of Scripture will bear a literal sense, the literal sense is the best; the only one indeed on which we are authorized to build. For the word of God was sent to give us instruction, not to receive our emendations; and if we once depart from the obvious signification, we give a loose to fancy, and open a way to all the capricious insolence and licentious imaginations of man. That same marked distinction of the three Persons in the Godhead is found in the Epistle to the

"not come unto you; but *if I depart* I will send *him unto you.*" (John xvi. 7.) The one Person was to be absent, when the other was present; consequently, as *Persons*, they could not be the same.

^r Dr. Priestley.

Hebrews; of which our adversaries are not disposed to allow that it proceeded from St. Paul. Without entering here into that question, thus much may be asserted without contradiction, that it was written in that same age, and was received as sound Christian doctrine by the primitive Churches; whatever might have been the questions raised as to its true author*. To Christians therefore the Epistle is good and sufficient authority. Therein Christ is said to have “ ‘ offered himself by the “ Holy Spirit without spot to God.” We have in this place distinct mention of our Saviour, of the Holy Ghost, and of the Father, who must be denoted by the word

* Origen was of opinion that St. Paul *was* the author, though the Unitarians have named his authority as supporting the opposite opinion; and in the extract which they cite, have fraudulently suppressed the part which they must have known to support the authenticity of the Epistle. Origen says, concerning any Church which shall hold it for a work of St. Paul, *αυτη ευδοκιματω και επι τούτω* and in his Epistle to Africanus declares his intention to publish an argument, *αφ αποδειξιν του αναγ Παυλου την επιστολην*, against those who disputed it.

† Heb. ix. 14.

God in this place, because the other two Persons are particularly specified. Neither will this mention of the Holy Spirit bear any other sense than that of Personality: for he is described as the agent, through whom Christ offered himself to God the Father, as the sacrifice for mankind. Again he is distinctly personified by St. Paul, when he says, “ “ We have access by one “ Spirit to the Father.” If this do not denote Personality, what does it denote? We have access to one Person by the agency of another. Miraculous gifts and powers, into which the Unitarians would explain away the positive personal appellation, can give no access to God, though access may be given upon account of them. But the Holy Ghost, who immediately conferred such gifts and powers, who worked with those on whom they were conferred, and whose aid and fellowship still, though not still visibly, supports all true Christians; he does give us access to God. He does it through the good works which he

^u Eph. ii. 2.

produces in our conduct, and which enable us to prefer our humble claim to a share in the gracious and all-powerful intercession and sacrifice of our ever blessed Redeemer.

In the same manner also the Spirit is mentioned to the Corinthians, as personal, and distinct from the Father: “^x The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” St. Peter’s judgment on Ananias has already been adduced: “^y Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? — thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” In this place the name and power of God unequivocally attributed to the Holy Ghost, plainly shew his participation in the Godhead; while the many expressions of distinct Personality above mentioned, establish, so far as we can comprehend it, and yet farther, his existence as a separate Person in that Godhead.

The evidence on this point would however not be complete, were we to omit

^x 1 Cor. ii. 10.

^y Acts v. 3, 4.

those two most remarkable and significant passages which are contained in the form of baptism, as it was ordained by our Saviour himself, and in the blessing used by his Apostles: “² Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now let us call to mind what was the state of all nations at the time when this commandment was given. The Roman power had extended itself over all the countries around Judæa, and indeed over the whole civilized world. Wherever their arms established their empire, its officers, civil and military, stationed upon their conquests, conveyed the religion of Rome; which was the most corrupt sort of Polythéism. They were ever ready to adopt, as objects of worship, the deities of any state which they conquered. Nay, we know that it was proposed at one time, to enrol Christ himself among the multitude of their Gods; and the unsociable tenets of Christianity, which did not

² Matt. xxviii. 19.

admit any communion or participation in God's honours, alone prevented it from being done. The other nations also of the world were, without exception, Pagans; and all worshipped more than one God. The Christian faith was sent forth to correct and reform those erroneous conceptions and idolatrous practices. It taught, that the world was reconciled to the one only God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and that men should thenceforth turn from those vanities in their worship, as St. Paul instructed the Athenians, and adore the one, living, eternal, and only true God. To those nations then, brought up in such mixed worship of many deities; to those nations, did our Saviour send his Apostles to make disciples of them, and to turn them from their own mistaken worship, to one which acknowledged only one God, in the strictest possible sense; and in order to effect that conversion, they were to baptize them in the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let any person of common sense and judgment put the question upon

this to himself. Was it probable that any *man* of sound judgment, was it possible that any inspired teacher, and above all others, that the Christ himself, should have proposed to those Pagan worshippers of many deities, a form of initiation, wherein three names are mentioned equally in the Godhead, if it were not absolutely necessary so to do? Could he, above all others supreme in wisdom and every perfection, or could even any *man* of common discretion, have layed such a snare for persons strongly tinctured with their prejudices, as to name unnecessarily three distinct Persons in an act which ascribed authority and Godhead to each of them; at the risk of giving a handle for relapsing into that vice to which the Jews had once been so fatally inclined, and in which their neighbours on every side, to whom that rite was to be communicated, were at that very time deeply involved? Would the Apostles have ventured upon a doctrine which bore so dangerous an appearance, unless it had been a matter of indispensable necessity to give them intimation of this mys-

tery from the first; unless it had been essential to the true profession of Christianity so to do? The argument, it must be observed, applies with equal force to all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity; and sets the divinity of the three upon precisely the same footing. So does the apostolic benediction, “^a The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” No one Person was to be omitted, because the blessing of *God* was fully implored on the converts; who were to understand that the three operations of the three Persons in the Godhead were alike essential to God’s blessing. The Holy Spirit was therefore, in the opinion of the Apostles, and of our Saviour himself, as much and as distinctly entitled to the honour of God, as either of the other two Persons. His comforting aid was deemed necessary to accompany the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son; and his name was solemnly and particu-

^a 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

larly invoked in conjunction with theirs, to give authority and sanction to the initiation of Christian converts.

The passages of Scripture which have now been adduced, are some of those which apply forcibly to the separate Personality of the Holy Ghost; a doctrine layed down distinctly in the word of God, though the manner and method of it be not distinctly comprehensible to our limited faculties, no more than the separate Personality of the Father and the Son in one and the same Godhead with the Holy Ghost. Many others might be brought forward, to shew the agency of the Holy Spirit, particularly, upon the souls of men; but it has been my endeavour to avoid those, for which the subterfuge of interpreting the name as an attribute of, or as an emanation from, the Father might be held out. That, in regard to the Person of the Son, was the heresy of Sabellius in a very early age of the Christian Church; and the Unitarian evasion of interpreting the name of the Holy Ghost, so as to signify only miraculous gifts and powers bestowed by the Father, is not far

removed from it. Still nearer does it approach to the heresy of Macedonius, which was solemnly condemned in the first Council of Constantinople. He taught that the Holy Ghost is “a *divine energy*, diffused
 “ throughout the universe, and not a Person
 “ distinct from the Father and the Son :”
 in substance nearly the same with the miraculous gifts and powers, which modern Unitarians would impose on us, contrary both to the word and sense of the holy Scriptures.

These licentious fancies of human imagination are not now, as we see, for the first time devised; nor are they now for the first time censured as violations of the pure Christian faith. The opinion of the early Fathers is decidedly the same with that of the Church of England on this point^a. But

^a The disciples of Polycarp, who was himself St. John's disciple, must be held to have known his doctrine. These are their words : Εργαζομαι υμεις ευχομεθα αδελφοι σιγχουντες τω κατα το ευαγγελιον λογω Ιησου Χριστου, μεδ' ου δοξα τω Θεω και Πατρι και Αγια Πνευματι, &c. *Smyrncorum Epistola de Martyrio Polycarpi.*

Huic autem plane gemina est δοξολογια Comitum Ignatii, sub finem Act. Martyr. S. Ignatii “Glorificantes

though the divine word so plainly upholds our doctrine, and the primitive churches following the apostolic age explained that word even as ours does; yet all are alike rejected, when they contradict those ideas, with which men fancy that their own reason has inspired them: all must be made to bow before the arbitrary conceits of the sceptic.

“ in ipsius venerabili et sancta memoria Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum: per quem, et cum quo, Patri gloria, et potentia, cum Spiritu Sancto, in sancta Ecclesia in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.” *Bulli Def. Fid. Nicæn.* §. xiii. pp. 55, 56.

Irenæus marks the distinction of the Holy Ghost from the Father, not as an Energy, but as a Person. Speaking of the Son, he says, “ Ab omnibus accipiens testimonium, quoniam vere homo et vere Deus, a Patre, a Spiritu, ab angelis, &c.” lib. iv. c. 14. A little farther onward he says also, there is one God the Father, one Son, one Holy Spirit. Again in the 37th chapter of the same book he says, that the Son and Holy Spirit are those to whom the Father addressed himself when he said, “ Let us make man in our image,” &c. So the same Father distinguishes between the Spirit as a Person, and the Spirit as not a Person, lib. v. c. 12. See *Bulli Def. Fid. Nicæn.* §. ix. p. 82, 83.

These, it must be remembered, were some of the very earliest Christians, who derived their doctrine from the immediate word of the very Apostles themselves.

Into such difficulties do men run themselves, when they must needs explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God farther than he has explained them; when, in the pride of their hearts, they disdain any prostration of their mortal and circumscribed understandings before his supreme and incomprehensible Godhead. If we must comprehend every thing before we can believe it, let us make trial of the meanest herb on the face of the earth; and see whether we can account for all its properties, without throwing ourselves blindly on God's will and pleasure. *How* do the prolific properties of the earth cause its increase? *How* are its leaves and flowers formed? And in what manner do the sap and juices produce those particular forms, and that specific mode of increase, which belongs to each one in particular? We shall perhaps be told, that it is their nature so to spring and so to increase. But this is not to explain, but to evade the difficulty. It is the nature of God, that in the Godhead there should be three Persons. The manner in which this sublime mystery of the Trinity in Unity

comes to pass, is not more removed from our knowledge, than the mode and principle of increase in the commonest plant ; or than that which may be more generally intelligible, the power of action in ourselves and every living creature. Does the Unitarian doubt whether the plants draw nourishment from the earth, because he cannot comprehend how the same earth communicates to each one its own proper shape and colours ? Does he doubt whether man has power to move, because he cannot see *how* his will communicates motion to his muscles ? because he cannot discern the process, by which the invisible and unsubstantial inclination acts upon the gross and corporeal frame ? No : the fact is before him ; and he is ready to make that prostration of his understanding before every part of the creation, which he scorns to make before the infinite and all perfect Creator. And yet to what does such scepticism lead ? If we allow to it a free course without restraint, there seems to be no reason why it should stop short even of the ancient Epicurean doctrine, that God has

no concern in mortal affairs. If we doubt this, let us but hear what the chief of sceptics in our own country has admitted :
 “^b Were our ignorance a sufficient reason
 “ for rejecting any thing, we should be led
 “ into that principle of refusing all energy
 “ to the Supreme Being.”

We have thus gone shortly through some of the most striking proofs from Scripture of the Trinity in general, and of the second and third Persons in particular. We have found the existence of three Persons in one God to be plainly declared by the word of the Almighty, though declared as a mystery, and therefore with some darkness as to the manner of it ; into which we cannot penetrate farther than he has been pleased to open the way. In our present state, we must be contented with such knowledge as is limited in proportion to our abilities. We know not yet what we shall be ; but it is one glorious prospect of the blessed hereafter, that *they* shall see God “^c as he is :” that *they* “^d shall know even as also they are

^b Hume's Phil. Essays, p. 17.

^c John iii. 2.

^d 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“known.” If then our eagerness to understand this mystery lead us to any thing, let it be to humble acquiescence in every revelation which it has pleased God to give, and to a continued course of spiritual improvement in this life, such as may lead us to a thoroughly Christian practice. So may we hope, through our blessed Saviour, to come to that inheritance which he has purchased for us with his most precious blood ; where all uncertainty and suspense shall be done away, and the fulness of all satisfaction shall at length be granted, as a part of that reward of the faithful which now passeth all understanding.

SERMON V.

ON THE JUDGMENT BY OUR SAVIOUR.

MATTH. XXV. 31.

*When the Son of man shall come in his glory,
and all his holy angels with him, then shall he
sit upon the throne of his glory.*

THE point of doctrine which is now proposed to our examination is one, on which, as to the general idea of a future judgment, there has been an almost universal consent in all countries and all ages of the world. Whatever corruptions have been introduced into religion, however obscured and defaced its truths may have become, there has yet always existed an impression, that we must give after death some account of those things which we have done in the body, whether they be good or evil. Like some other leading truths of religion, in which,

with considerable variations indeed; but in the main ground of which a general consent has been traced throughout the world, so this most important doctrine probably came down from patriarchal tradition. And it is an argument of the excellent providence of God, that an idea which alone can check the inordinate passions of those, who are either beyond the knowledge, or above the power of human laws, has never been suffered to vanish altogether. That there is a judgment to come is not then the matter in dispute. The Unitarians, as well as ourselves, profess to believe it. But the point in question between us, respects the person *by* whom judgment and justice will be administered on that occasion.

They hold, that Christ will indeed judge the world, but yet that he will be no more than a mere man; invested indeed with a certain authority and glory, but nevertheless not acting in his own right, but altogether with a subordinate and delegated power. They hold^a, that the resurrection

^a Belsham, vii. 4.

“ of the dead and the final judgment is
 “ that sublime and infinitely important doc-
 “ trine,” which they “ conceive to be the
 “ sum and substance of the Christian reve-
 “ lation.” Of its sublimity and infinite im-
 portance, we also have no manner of doubt.
 But we do *not* conceive that it is absolutely
 the sum and substance of the Christian re-
 velation. The fallacy of their assertion is
 visible in the concluding sentence of this
 article in their confession, wherein they as-
 sert, concerning the Christian revelation, a
 part of the truth, for the whole. They de-
 clare, that “^b the great object of it was to
 “ bring life and immortality to light.” We
 hold more than this. We hold, with the
 Apostle St. Paul, that “^c the grace of God
 “ was made manifest, by the appearing of
 “ our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abo-
 “ lished death, and brought life and im-
 “ mortality to light *through the Gospel*.”
 That life and immortality are brought to
 light by Jesus Christ, is the doctrine both
 of them and ourselves. The difference lies

^b Belsham, vii. 4.

^c 2 Tim. i. 10.

in this; that we hold them to have been brought to light through the Gospel; through belief of all the revelations, and practice of all the duties therein made known, and enjoined to us for observance; of which revealed truths the foundation stone is this which they deny, namely, that Jesus Christ the Son of God is come in the flesh. Not that a mere man was then created in the flesh, as a matter of course like all other men, without having previously existed distinct from the flesh from all eternity; but that Christ, the eternal and omnipotent Son, one of the three Persons who in entire equality compose the Unity of the Godhead, is come in the form of the man Jesus, having taken upon him a proper human body, which he had never borne before that time. This is the signification of St. John's expression, that "^d Christ is 'come in the flesh,'" and this the Unitarians deny. That very expression however implies that Christ was not naturally in the flesh. For a mere man to come in that

^d 1 John iv. 2.

flesh, in that nature which alone he inherits, were not a thing to be noticed. The wonder, the remarkable thing would be, if he should come otherwise^c. When therefore the Apostle says that Christ is come in the flesh, he gives a clear indication that the flesh was not his usual, nor his original, nor his proper nature. And it is necessary to recall these things to our recollection here. For if Christ came as a mere man, he must return as a mere man to judge the quick and dead. But though he will appear in the manhood united with the Godhead, yet he will not appear merely in the manhood: not in the manhood alone, however glorified it may be. The Unitarians appear, from the expressions employed in stating their dissent from the foundation of *Christianity*; for such it is; they appear to build upon the expression used by the inspired writers of "the man Jesus." St. Peter indeed uses that expression in his discourse upon occasion of the miraculous

^c See Middleton on the Greek Article, p. 351, 354: also Dean Magee on Atonement, iii. 32, in note, and 33, 34, *ibid*.

gifts of tongues : “^f Jesus of Nazareth, a “*man* approved of God among you, &c.” It gave no presumption of mere manhood that the Apostle spoke of Christ, who had been *at the time of which he was then speaking* in a human form, simply as a man. The same expression is used in the Old Testament, of persons whom nobody ever supposed to be any thing less than angels. The three angels who appeared to Abraham and to Lot are simply called men, because they were in fashion as men. Therefore St. Peter also speaking of the ministry of Jesus Christ in his humiliation, when under the form of man, calls him a man. But having thus informed the hearers, that he whom they had seen as a man among them, was the same from whom the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit proceeded ; he goes on to shew that the same man is also the Lord, applying to him David’s words : “ I foresaw the Lord always before “ my face, &c.” He then proceeds to shew that this Lord is he who was never to see

^f Acts ii. 22.

corruption, which David himself did see: and that the man Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, is now no longer in his mortal state of humiliation; but that the divine power has taken up the manhood to the throne of God; has made this same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ. St. Paul too, when he preached to the Athenians, declared that “^s God will “ judge the world in righteousness by that “ man whom he hath ordained.” The Apostle was then discoursing to persons who did not deny the existence of a Deity, though their idea of his nature and attributes was miserably confused and corrupted; and among the greater part of them a multitude of separate deities were, each in his particular time and place, the objects of adoration. The doctrines in which, (to speak of the mass of the nation, of a general assembly,) the doctrines in which they were entirely ignorant were, the Unity of God, together with the Mediation and Atonement made by one of the three Persons

^s Acts xvii. 31.

in that Unity, under the fashion of a man : and also the judgment hereafter to be administered by him. In this his first address therefore, the Apostle does not enter at large into the particulars of that mystery ; but contents himself with a general opening, and with facts less likely to move dispute. He tells them, that one God, incorporeal and invisible, made and governs all things, and that he will judge the world at its termination “ by that man whom he “ hath ordained :” a man to all intents and purposes in his human nature, so far as a real human body and soul could constitute a man ; though that manhood was mysteriously united to one of the Persons in the Godhead. But as this last part of the Christian doctrine was more difficult of comprehension, and more liable to perversion, among a conceited and cavilling people ; so he does not think fit to disclose it at this his opening of the Christian faith. He does not even mention Christ by name, nor give any hint of his ministry in the flesh ; but contents himself, in this his first address, with that which was most easily in-

telligible, as reason and sound judgment required that he should do. “^h He fed “them,” to use his own expression to the Corinthians, “with milk, and not with “meat; because they were not able to bear “it.” But wherever the whole doctrine of the Gospel was *fully* preached, we find abundant mention of our Saviour, as the Son of man, as the man whom God had ordained to take away our sins, and under other similar expressions. Nor is there any reason why we should shrink from the ⁱUnitarian’s blasphemous sarcasm, who without scruple imputes a “mean equivocation” to Christ and his Apostles, whenever they speak of his manhood, as distinct from the honours and powers of the Godhead. The style of insolence with which the writers of that party treat the most sacred expressions of God’s word carries its own cure with it. It must inspire disgust and offence, without carrying the slightest weight of conviction. The question here depends on the authenticity of those parts of Scripture, which un-

^h 1 Cor. iii. 2.

ⁱ Belsham, p. 36.

equivocally attribute Godhead to our Redeemer. And they are not shaken, and cannot be shaken, by any of these false designing arts, which endeavour to hold out a shew of criticism, while they are really no better than ^karbitrary alterations; which are invented in order to get rid of those passages, which in the most unequivocal manner ^lrefute the blasphemous doctrine of Christ's mere manhood. That God is the Judge of all mankind who shall render to all according to their works, appears most evidently from every part of the word of God. That the man Jesus shall execute precisely the same high office is as unquestionably revealed. The humble piety of a Christian teaches him not to reject either part of the doctrine, however difficult he may find it to arrange, in a manner intelligible to his comprehension, this distinction with this union of divine and human nature in Christ Jesus. The unbeliever, on the contrary, feels it to be beyond his reason to comprehend this mys-

^k See Sermon VI:

^l See Sermon II.

tery, and therefore insolently rejects it; and thinks to get clear of the question by a profane sneer at the idea of a God-man. It is never to be forgotten, it can scarcely be enough impressed, that a Christian *must* be “meek and lowly in heart.” He *must* take God’s revelations thankfully, even as they are; and never imagine himself at liberty to reject or modify, because he may not understand them. All infidelity, if it be not founded in conceit, is principally upheld by it. Pride was the vice which cast Satan down from heaven; and those who will follow his pride, must expect to be involved in the endless perdition which is its necessary consequence.

But let us turn to the holy Scriptures, and examine the passages which relate to the final judgment, and to the high office of administering justice on that occasion, which they assign to Christ the Almighty Son, either by the name of the Son of man, or by that of the man Jesus, or by any other similar appellation. We find, in the first place, the text which I have taken this day to stand directly in opposition to the

adversaries of the established Christian faith. And that text is one of great importance. The words are those of our Saviour himself, when he was revealing to his Apostles, so far as he thought it proper for them to know it, the manner of his appearance to judgment at the last day. There will probably be no question, as there cannot reasonably be any doubt, that he *then* intended himself by the Son of man, though the expression has occasionally been otherwise applied, especially to the Prophet Ezekiel. But it is very evident from the context that Christ was not then describing himself as a *mere man*. “^m When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him”—what is the glory in which he is here described as coming? His own proper glory, not one delegated to him for the occasion; “ⁿ the glory,” as he says to the Father, “which I had with thee before the world was:” the glory of one surrounded by the attendant angels, and

^m Matt. xxv. 31.ⁿ John xvii. 5.

coming in the clouds of heaven. But such glory belongs exclusively to God Almighty; as our blessed Saviour in another place describes it, where he says, “^o Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of *the Father* with the holy angels.” Now God himself declares, “^p My glory will I not give to another:” a positive declaration, which excludes from all manner of participation in that glory every created being, of whatever rank or degree. And yet Christ claims participation in that glory at the day of judgment, as he had possessed it before the world was. He must therefore judge the world, not as man alone, but as God coupled with the manhood; for as God alone could he have existed before the world was. There is no reason whatever for supposing, that any mere man, in all respects like unto his fellows, can be dignified with the peculiar

^o Mark viii. 38.

^p Isa. xlii. 8. xviii. 11.

honours of the Almighty. Such is the incommunicable name Jehovah, which has been shewn to be so often applied in the Old Testament to Christ. Such is the attendance of all the holy angels, with the right to call that glory which he enjoys indifferently his own, or the glory of the Father. *God* is always declared to be our Judge; the same who once appeared in Christ with humiliation, “reconciling the world unto himself;” and who will also come again in Christ with glory, to judge mankind for their use or abuse of such reconciliation. It is therefore manifest blasphemy, to describe as a mere man him who shall then sit on the throne of *his* glory, which is the glory of God omnipotent. The phrase, Son of man, occurs, as has been observed, not unfrequently in the Old Testament. The Jews therefore knew how it is there applied; and if there had been any tolerable ground for inferring that the expression denoted a mere man, they could not have charged our Lord with blasphemy for having declared, “⁹ Here-

⁹ Matt. xxvi. 64.

“ after shall ye see the Son of man sitting
“ on the right hand of power, and coming
“ in the clouds of heaven.” But the Jews
perceived distinctly from that expression,
that he claimed to himself supremacy and
Godhead. They therefore immediately
exclaimed, “ He hath spoken blasphemy :”
as on another occasion they did in like
manner, specifying that in which they con-
ceived that blasphemy to consist ; “ ^r Be-
“ cause thou, being a man, makest thyself
“ God.” I do not say that the expression
used on that occasion was exactly the same
as that on the first mentioned ; but notice it
here, to shew, from the Jews’ own explana-
tion of that which they accounted for blas-
phemy, that they understood him, when
upon his trial before the high priest, to
claim Godhead, in saying that he was the
Son of man who should be seen sitting on
the right hand of power, and coming in
the clouds of heaven. Now every Jew
knew, that Enoch and Elijah had been
taken up to the divine presence ; and there

^r John x. 33.

could be no *blasphemy* in any man's assertion, that he, a mere mortal, should be, as those two mortals had been, exalted to any celestial dignity whatsoever, short of actual Deity. We must take notice, that they do not reproach our Lord for any degree of presumption alone, but for actual blasphemy; that "thou, *being a man*, "makest thyself *God*;" and he, by his silence upon that charge, suffers that sense to pass in which they understood his words. That instance of what the Jews considered to be blasphemy, when our Saviour was not upon his trial, was indeed infinitely the strongest. For though he did not at that time call himself man, or the Son of man, yet he who frequently at other times had taken those appellations to himself, or had accepted them from his Apostles, in that instance plainly asserted, "The Father is "in me, and I in him."

Our Saviour always kept his Sonship, his Godhead, distinct from the sonship of his disciples, who were mere men. He taught them to pray, "Our Father," but he joined not himself with them; for he withdrew

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from them, and prayed, "My Father." "I go," says he, "to *my* Father, and "*your* Father; and to *my* God, and *your* "God." He joins without losing the distinction, he distinguishes without losing the connection. He makes us to be united *in* him; but himself to be one *with* the Father^s.

This Person then of the Son, thus identified in being with the Father; this Judge of all the earth, who shall come at the last day, and whom the Unitarians represent as a mere man, possesses all the attributes of the Godhead. He calls the angels his own, therefore, when he says, that he, "the Son of man, shall send forth *his* angels:" those angels whom God "^u maketh *his* spirits," but of whom it is not allowable for any one to say, that delegated power over them shall be given to any mortal. He shall come to judgment in *his own* Godhead, not as a glorified man

^s Sic jungit ut distinguat, sic distinguit ut non se-jungat. Unum nos vult esse in se; unum autem Patrem et se. *S. Aug. in Joan.*

^t Matt. xiii. 41.

^u Psalm civ. 4.

acting by commission. What can be plainer than St. Paul's testimony in his Epistle to the Thessalonians; " * The *Lord* " *himself* shall descend from heaven, with " a shout, with the voice of the archangel, " and with the trump of God." The Lord, that is, the second Person, shall descend with the archangel and the honours of God. Yet he who thus wrote, ascribed at the same time those very honours to Christ *as his own*; " ' The Lord Jesus shall be " revealed from heaven with his mighty " angels." How can these unbelievers reconcile the state to which they would lower the Judge of all the earth with these things? How can they reconcile it with that previous existence in heaven from the beginning, which St. John so distinctly asserts in the opening of his Gospel? What can be the meaning of our Lord's question to the Jews, " * What, and if ye shall see " the Son of man ascend up," not merely as a glorified man taken into God's blessed

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

† 2 Thess. i. 7. μετ' αγγελων δυναμειωσ αυτου.

‡ John vi. 62.

abode by way of reward, of which we certainly do know two instances in Enoch and Elijah; but, “ascend up *where he was before?*” If he resided in heaven before he came down to earth, as is most manifest from hence, how dare they to call him a “mere man, in all respects like unto his fellows?” What mere man ever ascended into heaven of his own act and power, as our Saviour did? “^a No man,” says St. John, reporting our Lord’s own words, “No man hath ascended up into heaven, save he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which *is* in heaven.” The Son of man then, who is the Judge appointed for the last day, shall come in his own proper glory to judgment. And he, that very Son of man, while he was on earth speaking the words just now recited, declares at the same moment that he *is*, not merely that he *was*, in heaven: a declaration of which, if his two natures, the divine and the human, be denied, if it be a “^b mean equivocation”

^a John iii. 13.

^b Belsham.

to speak of the one distinctly from the other, no tolerable sense can possibly be made: the dreadful impiety of which supposition, no true and devout Christian can contemplate without abhorrence and detestation. The title of Son of man, that very title from whence our adversaries would infer the real and proper humanity of our future Judge, as totally divested of any participation of right in the Godhead; is yet attributed to him in the prophecies, in language of such sublimity, and descriptive of such majesty, as are utterly inapplicable to any mortal. That title is never indeed employed as an appellation of any ordinary person, nor of any one below the dignity of princes and prophets. And our Saviour takes it peculiarly to himself, to point out that he is the Person of whom Daniel so magnificently prophesied: “ I
 “ saw in the night visions, and, behold, one
 “ like the Son of man came with the clouds
 “ of heaven, and came to the Ancient of
 “ days, and they brought him near unto

“ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

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“ him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” The title of Son of man is therefore not altogether an appellation of humiliation ; but in this place it is clearly visible, that the honours and divinity assigned to that name by the Prophet Daniel, honours and divinity which shall not pass away, belong to our Lord Jesus, whom all allow to be the Judge there mentioned. The name may also sometimes perhaps have relation to the human nature which he bore, a real and true human nature, but still united with the divine. In regard to that his incarnation, he is sometimes styled man, and the Son of man. That incarnation of the Godhead in one of the three Persons, is however one of the principal points which these Unitarians deny ; and on that incarnation our present question altogether depends. While they deny that, they must also ne-

cessarily reject with it the atonement, for no mere man could make atonement for others. They must deny all peculiar signification in the title of the Son of man, for it can be no distinction to call any mortal by that name, because he is such by the ordinary course of nature. But it was necessary to declare plainly, that he who so often proclaimed himself the Son of God, and who was so often announced as such by the voice of the Father, or through the ministry of his angels; it was necessary to make it generally known, that this exalted Person was the Son of man also; that he truly bore the human nature of his mother Mary, and shall bear it in like manner when he shall return again to judgment. This is a material part of that divine dispensation, and shews plainly the great mercy of God in his dealings with us, that the most solemn and awful act of his authority, the general judgment, shall be administered by one, who, having partaken of our infirmities, must therefore be fully aware of them, and able to make every proper allowance for

them. Therefore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle comforts them on that very ground: “^d We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are.” This very provision then, which the Almighty has made in his mercy, as a source of comfort and encouragement to us and our infirmities, is abused by these Unitarians into an argument to support their denial of his Godhead, to make the Judge of all flesh mere flesh in himself, and to do away all his title to real and proper Deity! They act thus, in the face of all that evidence which was miraculously given throughout the ministry of Jesus, in proof of the truth of his assertions, that he was himself the very and eternal God; one and the same, in Deity, with the Father; though distinct, in Personality, as the Son. These are truths on which we have before insisted in proving from holy Scripture the Deity of the Son. But we are necessarily again re-

^d Heb. iv. 14, 15.

minded of them in this place, where the truth, that Christ Jesus shall be the Judge of quick and dead, is not the matter in dispute ; but where we find it asserted by the unbeliever, that he will come in that capacity only with a *delegated* authority ; not acting in right of *his own* Godhead, but only as a *man* empowered and commissioned by God.

St. Paul tells us, that God hath given assurance that Jesus will come again to judgment, “^e in that he hath raised him from “ the dead.” But this assurance, which is the accomplishment of his own repeated prediction, and the seal to the truth of all his assertions, seems to have little or no weight with the modern sceptic. Yet this is the test to which our Lord repeatedly put his claim to actual Godhead ; as when he said, “^f Destroy this temple, and in “ three days *I* will raise it up.” Christ had entered into the temple, and asserted *his* right to that holy place, in which none but the Most High could possess any right,

^e Acts xvii. 31.

^f John ii. 19.

by casting out those whose occupations were profanation to it, and by the expressions which he used in so doing. The Jews, seeing him perform that act of authority, and hearing the language with which he accompanied it, demand a sign from him. Now it must be remarked, that the Jews always comprehended thoroughly the expression used by our Saviour, when he called himself the Son of God. They knew that it implied actual Godhead, and condemned him for blasphemy on that very charge. In like manner, when he here said, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandize," they understood that he called God his Father; not generally, as the Father of all; nor more particularly, as he is the Father of the righteous; but *most* peculiarly, "making himself equal with God;" as we find that he was considered to have done, by calling God his *own* Father. It was re-

^s 1 John v. 18.

^h Πατέρα ιδιον. Justin Martyr shews that the name, the Son of God, is not applicable to Christ merely in common with holy men. Apolog. i. 44. Ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ἐκεί-

served for the Socinians and their followers to go beyond the Jews; to put a misconstruction on that expression, and degrade, if they had been able, him whom they acknowledge for their Saviour, to a mere mortal. The Jews understood that he claimed equal Godhead with the Father, and of this they demanded a sign. Very rarely did our Lord comply with that insolent demand; never, indeed, in the sense in which they made it. And when he did so, it was by a future sign, which at once gave proof of his foreknowledge, and pointed to that decisive evidence on which, more perhaps than on any other single proof, he rested his claim to Omnipotence; namely, his own resurrection by himself from the dead. To that fact then, though hitherto unperformed, he referred the Jews, as to a complete demonstration that he was very God. To that fact his Apostle St. Paul afterward appealed, as a proof

του, Ὁ μόνος λεγόμενος κυρίως υἱός, &c. and in his Dialogue with Trypho, 332. Μονογενὴς πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεγενημένος, καὶ ὕστερον ἀνδραπὸς διὰ τῆς παρθενοῦ γενομένος.

that he, the same Lord Jesus, was ordained to be Judge of quick and dead. And such a proof it was. Our Saviour had distinctly foretold the future judgment, when all flesh should appear upon their trial before *God*. He had declared himself to be the Son of God, equal to, and one with, the Father. He had required “ⁱ that “all men should honour the Son, even as “they honour the Father;” and that, because the “Father hath committed all “judgment to the Son.” He had claimed Supreme Deity, when he cried openly among the Jews, “^k I and my Father are “one.” If then he was actually God, all flesh is to be judged by him *as God*, and not as mere man in commission under God. That he was God, he himself put to the test of his rising again the third day after his death; and therefore St. Paul well declared, that his having so done was full proof that he was to be the Judge of quick and dead.

These are plain and direct inferences,

ⁱ John v. 23.

^k John x. 30.

consistent with the whole tenor of the Gospel, and which do not admit any contrary interpretation without violence to sense and language. They can hardly be, by this time, unknown to the Unitarians. And we cannot be too much on our guard against imitating the conduct of presumptuous men, who strive to uphold the opinions which they have taken up, in contradiction to the general teaching of God's word, by overstrained constructions of insulated and detached expressions of holy Writ. Such has ever been the infidel's constant method, and indeed their only shadow of support from Scripture; a support which, before heedless eyes, they may set up in appearance, while they are wresting the word of God to their own destruction. The truth of this question which they raise, concerning the Deity or manhood of him who is ordained to be the Judge of all the earth, cannot stand or fall alone. It is inseparably connected with the whole Christian faith, being placed on the same test with our Saviour's Godhead, namely, the resurrection of him from the dead. Against the gene-

ral and harmonious evidence of the whole Gospel, the Unitarian arrays a few selected and mutilated passages, which, if taken singly, may bear a sound which shall seem to concur with his favourite opinions; and he rests his whole system on them, without taking into the account the tenor of our Saviour's doctrine in general, as delivered by himself and his Apostles. Those single passages, like all others, are best explained in that sense which the context, and general tenor of the Scripture in which they are placed, manifestly points out. But the doctrine which contradicts the unbeliever's construction of them, cannot be so overthrown; for it is the uniform doctrine of the Christian revelation. Every thing in Scripture points to the same evidence: "If these," as said our Saviour to the Pharisees, who were, like the Unitarians, unbelievers in his Godhead, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The Socinians must know, that their method of torturing the words of Scripture, in order to force a particular interpretation upon them, would

not be endured, if they were so to treat the common writings of men. And they shew more respect for their own conceits, than for God's revelations, when they force and misconstrue his holy word, that they may represent it as utterly inconsistent with itself, rather than bend their pride to bow to a doctrine which they cannot comprehend, though it be plainly revealed, and expressly sanctioned by the word of the Most High¹.

¹ Bishop Pearson observes, on the question of the nature of Christ our Judge, "There is an original, supreme, autocratorical, judiciary power. There is a judiciary power derived, delegated, given by commission. Christ, as God, hath the first, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Christ, as man, hath the second, from the Father expressly, from the Holy Ghost concomitantly; for 'the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.'" *Pearson on the Creed*, Art. vii.

Chrysostom, on a question of the punctuation of John v. 27. shews what the Church then held on this point: Ου γαρ δια τωτο ελαβε κρισιν οτι ανθρωπος εστι, (επι τι εκωλυε παντας ανθρωπους ειναι κριτας;) αλλ' επειδη της αρεθτου ηστας εκεινης εστιν υιος, δια τουτο εστι κριτης, &c.

Theophylact says the same: Την γαρ κρισιν δεδωκε τω Υιω ο Πατηρ, ουκ οτι Υιος ανθρωπου εστι, αλλ' οτι Θεος, &c.

Potestatem dedit ei et iudicium facere quoniam filius hominis est. Puto nihil esse manifestius. Nam quia

Filius Dei est æqualis Patri, non accipit hanc potestatem iudicii faciendi, sed habet illam cum Patre in occulto. Accipit autem illam, ut boni et mali eum videant iudicantem, quia filius hominis est. Augustin. de Trin. lib. i. c. 13.

SERMON VI.

ON THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

WHATEVER be the errors or heresies which have at any time intruded themselves into the Church of Christ, and how far soever they may have gone astray from its genuine faith, yet all have been contented to shelter themselves under the authority of holy Scripture. Others, whoever they be, who have set forth strange doctrines, have been satisfied with bringing, by art and contrivance, certain insulated and detached passages in support of their theories; and though this was done in violation of its uniform tenor and general precept, yet they seldom ventured to

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do more. But the modern Unitarian has taken, as we shall see, a bolder step. He has made more daring inroads upon sacred truth ; and, with his eyes open—for the utmost stretch of charity cannot suppose the contrary, seeing that the system of his party is irreconcilable with the word of God, *as it stands delivered by him*—has endeavoured to bend that holy word to an accommodation to his own system. The charge is indeed one of the heaviest description. But it admits of indubitable proof, in spite of his general profession of respect for the word of Divine revelation. The faith which the Unitarians now profess to hold concerning the Holy Scriptures is this : That they “^a contain a revelation from God, and that they are the “ only authentic repositories of his revealed will.” But they declare, that they “ discover no evidence of plenary inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old “ and New Testament.” And again, they admit that “ the Bible, the New Testa-

^a Belsham, p. 7.

“ment especially, *though not itself inspired throughout*, contains the word of “God.” Thus they prepare the way for admitting or rejecting just so much, or so little, as may serve their purpose. I propose in this discourse to examine this their admission, and to see how far it is discordant from the doctrine of the Church of England, and from the truth. We will also observe how far their own practices have shewn that respect, which their own admission demands from them, towards those sacred writings; especially in regard to their treatment of the New Testament in their New, and, as they are pleased to style it, Improved Version.

Now it is not any part of the doctrine of our Church to maintain the plenary inspiration of Scripture, if by plenary inspiration it be intended, that *every several word* was suggested by the Holy Ghost. Yet still we do assert, that the Scripture ^bis inspired throughout, as to the doctrines therein delivered, and even as to the guarding of

^b Burnet, XXXIX Articles, Art. vi.

the language from any error in faith or practice. This assertion however applies; of course, only to the canonical books. Respecting those which are called Apocryphal, our Church, since the Reformation, has ever held a different opinion. We maintain that the books admitted by our Church into the canon of Scripture, are *so far as this* inspired throughout; though we do not hold that the very words, and every particular expression, proceeded from the Holy Spirit. St. Paul himself indeed tells us so much; and makes a distinction between those exhortations which were his own, and those which came expressly from God. For instance, when mentioning his own labours and sufferings, he says, “That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly.” In like manner, to the same Corinthians, he distinguished in his former Epistle between the precepts of his own advice, and those of divine command. In his injunctions to married persons, he first gives a precept founded on the original

• Burnet, XXXIX Articles, Art. vi. d. 2 Cor. xi. 17.

and express institution of God; “Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:” afterward he continues, “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” We may not however suppose that these precepts, which the Apostle calls his own, were destitute of the superintending guidance of the Holy Ghost; though he marks them, as not forming a part of the express commandment.

The Unitarians profess general belief in the Scriptures, because the inspiration of them cannot generally be questioned, with any appearance of reason. But they object to the “plenary inspiration” of them, not on account of such passages as evidently do not require particular inspiration, because they are manifestly within the common scope of human wisdom; but because, in disavowing the inspiration of the Bible, they open a way, as they imagine, for the rejection, or alteration, or mutilation, of any texts of Scripture which militate most strongly against their system. Like the

• 1 Cor. vii. 10.

Pharisees of old, they make the commandments of God of none effect, and by an art more unjustifiable even than theirs. The Pharisees had indeed a tradition, which set itself up to oppose, and even to overrule, the written Law. But they never presumed to change nor falsify the words of that Law. They did not presume to call that the word of the Lord, which they had substituted for his word. They ventured not to touch its precepts and threatenings, in the way of alteration or emendation. But these Unitarians, as they call themselves by way of distinction, avowing respect for the Gospel, seek, by impeaching its integrity, to undermine and overthrow it: and being fully aware that its doctrine is directly opposed to theirs, arbitrarily cut down, disguise, and pervert, its peculiar and essential truths. They profess, at the same time, to publish a more true and correct version of that, which they cannot possibly be ignorant that they have corrupted and mutilated in the most audacious, fraudulent, and unjustifiable manner. Strong as these expressions may appear, I doubt not but

that every one, who shall at all have examined into their "New and Improved Version," has found them to be not only justified by the treatment which the word of God has received at their hands, but rendered absolutely necessary, by the deceitful professions which they hold out to draw in those who are not aware of their dishonest arts ; to allure them to the snare which is made ready, in the corrupted text and deceitful notes of that "New and Improved Version." They profess to take for their foundation a careful and accurate Greek text^f. And since the common and authorised version is not sufficiently correct for them, they resort to another, made, as they say, by one of our ^gArchbishops. Such professions carry an appearance of fairness. But it is no more than appearance, and vanishes so soon as we examine at all into it. In truth, the authorised version is too well known, to have been altered without immediate detection ; and is too manifestly opposed to their peculiar doctrines, to be

^f Griesbach's.

^g Archbishop Newcome.

left unaltered in a version published by them. The version of the Archbishop, whom they profess to follow, is comparatively in few hands ; and it might be believed, by those who have not seen it, that all their alterations are copied from thence. This is obviously their reason for holding up his version as their model, when in truth they have departed even from it in many very material instances, without any notice given of such variation. Nor have they dealt more faithfully with the Greek text, in that edition which they profess to hold in such estimation ; principally perhaps making such profession, that they may depreciate every other in comparison with it. For they talk largely of the incorrectness of all other editions ; as if errors, and those of material consequence, had abounded in all, till this made its appearance. Now the fact is found to be directly opposite to their assertion, as upon accurate inquiry will be easily perceived. For example, let us take the Gospel by St. John ; for it is of the greatest consequence in this present question, because it is the fullest on the subject

of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, as the Unitarians well know; and it is the one of all others which they would most gladly set aside, on account of the unequivocal attestation which it bears to our blessed Saviour's actual and perfect Godhead. In this Gospel, numerous, extremely numerous, as are the smaller variations, which the diligence of the learned and studious has discovered in the different copies of the New Testament; yet among all of them, and they amount to more than 1700^g, there are not by the largest estimate more than ten of any real importance to the sense^h: and even they are not now brought to light for the first time, but have been observed and pointed out one hundred and fifty years since. Surely then there is but little occasion for talking, as those editors do, of the great superiority, as to purity, of that Greek edition which they profess to have used. There would have been but little ground for it, even if they had ad-

^g 1787.

^h Consult Nares on the Unitarian Version, Introduct. p. xxx.

hered faithfully to its text. But it looks very suspicious, when we detect them in departing from it precisely in those places, where the maintenance of their cause requires that its true and obvious sense should not be deemed the real and correct interpretation. There is too much reason to suspect, that they selected Griesbach's text for the same reason as Archbishop Newcome's Version ; and that they professed to follow both, because they were less generally known, and therefore their deviations from them less likely to be detected. And they have also a farther inducement to that practice, in the convenience of deriving sanction from those names, and under their authority imposing their own perverted doctrines the more effectually on the unguarded reader. If we may judge from the actions of this sect, and they are a far more certain test than professions and declarations, we shall discover but little reverence for the word of God ; which they presume to set aside in so many instances, that they may find a place for their own opinions in contradiction to it.

Nor can it be too much to assert this, when we find them departing from that which is received, and which *they* profess to receive, as the genuine text, whenever it suits their purpose so to do, on their own single authority; and frequently without any notice of such variation. Such conduct, when we consider the professions held out by them, of always giving intimation of any departure from their models, can be accounted for nothing better than wilful and fraudulent deception.

And let any one consider what must be the merits of that cause which stands in need of support, and requires to be maintained by arts such as these. What is the object of holding up the name of one Archbishopⁱ, as the author of that version which they declare that they took from him? Why do they prefix to their version a motto from the words of another Archbishop^k? The motive is plain. It is to induce the world to suppose, that both were of the same opinions with themselves; and

ⁱ Archbishop Newcome.

^k Archbishop Parker's Preface to the Bishops' Bible.

that their "New and Improved Version," as they are pleased to call it, is the same with that of the Prelate whom they do not leave us merely to conjecture ~~that~~ they follow; but whose English text they openly profess to be the general groundwork of their own, from which they have never varied, without announcing to their readers all such variations. Much in the same spirit is the attempt which they have made to falsify the account of our Saviour's birth, by bringing forward an author¹ to testify to that which he never testified. Lardner, though they number him among their party, was a diligent and faithful writer; and on account of that his reputation, they cite him, to shew that the account given in the Gospels is erroneous, and that our Lord was not born till after Herod's death. If they could establish that assertion, it must shake the whole credit of that narrative which declares exactly the contrary. But what can we think of their fidelity, when we turn to him from whom they profess to

¹ Lardner, Credibility of the Gospel.

draw their authority, and find, as we do find, that he has asserted no such thing? What can we think of their honesty, when we read, that though he admits the existence of some uncertainty in the date of Herod's death; yet he concludes that our Saviour was born more than one, if not two years previous to that event? In the same spirit they would mutilate the Gospels, as the Ebionites did formerly, that they may justify their denial of the miraculous conception of our blessed Saviour. ^m So do they now seek to revive the assertion of one of their writers concerning those Ebionites, namely, that they were the primitive Christians, and that their errors were the doctrines of the original Church. And these things they utter now, with as much confidence, as if they had not been long since completely refuted by a learned Prelate,ⁿ whom they all dare to depreciate, now that he is dead, though not even the

^m See Magee on Atonement, &c. Postscript to the Appendix, p. 265, and note; pp. 266, 267, 268, 269, and note in p. 269.

ⁿ Bishop Horsley; see Controversy with Dr. Priestley.

ablest of them could give him a satisfactory answer while he was alive. What shall we think of persons who profess to receive the Scriptures as the revealed will of God, and yet do not hesitate to interpolate, and omit, and alter by their false comments, whatever stands in their way? When they meet with the distinguishing title of *the* Son of God applied to Jesus Christ, they studiously substitute *a* Son of God, and then refer us to our Saviour's question, "° If he (God) called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" They refer to this passage, as if it had proved that the phrase, the Son of God, signifies nothing more than a prophet. Whereas, that is not the signification of the passage; which marks very strongly the distinction between those called sons of God in general, and him who bore the peculiar and exclu-

° John x. 35, 36.

sive title of *the* Son of God ; who is distinguished by the appellation of the “ only “ begotten,” and the “ beloved” Son, which are exclusively applied to Christ *the* Son, and not merely *a* Son of the Father. “ The only Son,” as Justin Martyr says, “ properly so called ;” “ The only begotten “ of the Father, begotten as his own proper “ Word and Power.” It is one of their artifices in their treatment of the Scriptures, which they profess to receive as generally inspired, while they alter and omit particular passages, to suit their own purpose ; it is one of their artifices, to make free in this manner with the article ; by doing away its definite signification, as if it were not expressed in the original language, and substituting *a* Son for *the* Son of God, whenever they find it convenient so to do. So frequent is the liberty which they take, of omitting, and even occasionally, when it suits them, of inserting, arbitrarily, the definite article before personal and descriptive nouns ; that this alone is enough to do away all the claim which they set up, as editors of a more correct

version of the New Testament, than that which is commonly received. For the sense of many passages, and those very important, is materially affected by such alteration; as must be sufficiently evident to any one who will examine with care the Greek text of such passages. The present chief advocate of Unitarianism gives us indeed a manifest clue to trace the motives of this their conduct, when he tells us, that “^p all Christians are children of God, being the heirs and expectants of a happy and immortal life.” Every Christian therefore, and such they call themselves, every Christian is, according to their definition, a son of God. And holding, as they do, the mere humanity of our Saviour, it is obvious what is their reason for styling him *a* Son, and not *the* Son of God, in defiance of the Greek expression, which defines his peculiar title with precision. ^q The main object of the Unitarians is to overthrow the actual Deity of our Saviour

^p Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, p. 262.

^q See Magee on Atonement. Postscript to the Appendix, p. 19. note.

Jesus Christ, which has, I trust, been sufficiently vindicated, even by the few decisive passages which were adduced, out of many, in a former discourse'. In their attempts to accomplish that object, they could not but see that nothing stands more directly in their way than St. John's Gospel, and especially the very opening of it. Now it is well known to Christians, that the declaration there made of Christ's Godhead was rendered necessary by the heresy of Cerinthus; who living at the same time and in the same neighbourhood with the Apostle, taught, as Unitarians now do, the mere humanity of our Lord and Saviour. Here therefore the editors of the "Improved Version" shew their respect for the Scriptures, by endeavouring to explain away, what they cannot absolutely reject, the expression, "In the beginning was the Word." They tell us, that "the beginning" here means the beginning of the Gospel, though, standing as it does in that place, it is manifest, to any unprejudiced

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person, that it has no relation to the Gospel, nor to any thing upon the face of the earth. For the Evangelist there speaks of the creation of the universe: “*All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” All common language and common sense require, that “*the beginning*” should here signify the very beginning of all things. And that is its obvious sense, when it stands thus singly and unconnected. If any doubt could arise upon this point, it would best be resolved by the Apostle’s rule, “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual;*” in this instance, the language of the New, with that of the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. Whatever be the peculiarities of expression in the one, we may reasonably expect to find the same in the other also; for both are the Greek of Jews; and there is no reason to suppose that the Holy Ghost provided for elegancies of diction, though he assuredly guarded the writers from errors, in matter and in language. We may therefore expect to find the same peculiarities of phraseology in

the Greek of both parts of the Bible; and whatever signification belongs to a term in the one, must belong to the same term, under similar circumstances of situation and connection, in the other. Now St. John opens his Gospel thus: "In the beginning was the Word," &c. The book of Genesis also opens thus: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Whatever therefore is the signification of "the beginning" in the one passage, is manifestly such in the other also. But this did not serve the purpose of the Unitarian editors; and therefore their reverence for the word of God gave place to their zeal for the maintenance of their own peculiar doctrine. They will not gain much by a mere profession of respect in the face of conduct such as this; for though we be never so much disposed in charity to allow, that they may have some reverence for books which they hold

Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος.
Εν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

to "contain a revelation from God," and to be "the only repositories of his will;" yet we can hardly allow it, when their conduct manifestly proves the contrary. In the same spirit, however, do they proceed to explain away the Apostle's declaration, that "the Word was God." This, as they tell us, means, that "he went into retirement to commune with his God." It was necessary to get rid of the preceding assertion, that the Word was "in the beginning," in order to introduce this construction; and their anxiety to get rid of it at any rate, excites a suspicion that they were conscious of a more direct interpretation. This going into retirement to commune with God, is also inconsistent with the very next passage, "the Word was God:" an expression so plain and direct, that we can hardly believe it possible for any man really to mistake it. These editors, however, in their anxiety to do away our Saviour's Godhead, seem not to have observed how they contradict their own fellows. At the end of their notes on

this chapter, they introduce the version of a private Unitarian^u of note among them; apparently with the intention of weakening the idea, that the Word means Christ, the medium of communication between God and man. If however they mean to ascribe any authority to that writer, they must admit what he evidently does; that "in the beginning" has the same signification in the opening of St. John's Gospel, as in that of the book of Genesis, and stands for the beginning of the universe. For, as they do not adopt in their Version his change of Wisdom, instead of the Word, if they intend to confirm any thing, it should be his exposition of those terms in the translation of which they both agree; and of them, "In the beginning" is one. By their insertion of this author's version they involve themselves in this difficulty; either that they must contradict him, or must shew that he contradicts them; unless indeed they have brought him forward

^u Lindsey. See Nares on the Unitarian Version, p. 105, note.

merely to perplex and unsettle the opinions of the unlearned and unstable, by laying before them at once a variety of doubts and objections; which would be an additional proof of that respect, which they profess to entertain for a revelation from God. As they treat St. John's Gospel, so, or even in a worse manner, do they treat that of St. Luke; where the account of our Saviour's miraculous conception is so invincible an obstacle to their theories, that one of their leaders^y proposed to leave it out altogether; even though another^z expressly admits its authenticity. When we see such conduct as this, we cannot but think their admission, that the Scriptures contain the only revelation of God's word; to be of little or no real value; since the very man who admits it proposes without hesitation to cut off at once a very material part of that word, because it interferes with the system which he and his fellows have set up. Their treatment of the holy Scrip-

* Compare the annunciation in St. Luke with the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

^y Belsham.

^z Dr. Carpenter.

tures is indeed, throughout, such as would be deemed notoriously unfair and fraudulent, if applied to any common book; and with regard to those most precious revelations of God's will, it is altogether impious and inexcusable. They scruple not arbitrarily to reject from their Version any particular passages which speak strongly against them; and that they pitch on such constantly for rejection or alteration, is a circumstance too remarkable, and too much according with their general inclination, and the interests of their party, to be passed over as an accidental circumstance. It renders it difficult, if not impossible, for any impartial mind to acquit them of wilful and deliberate corruption of the word of life. For it is not with those two Evangelists alone that they deal thus, They attempt peremptorily to set aside St. Peter's words also, ^a marking as spurious, without ceremony, the whole second chapter of his second Epistle. And no wonder; for it begins with the mention of

^a 2 Pet. ii.

“false teachers, who should bring in *damnable* heresies, even *denying the Lord who bought them.*” An offensive passage indeed to those teachers, whose leading article is the denial of our Lord and of his atonement! Yet this they do, in defiance of the two authorities by whom they profess to abide always. But of such conduct it would be endless to enumerate all the instances^b. For though they tell the world, that notice is always given in their Version of any variation from that of the Prelate whose English text they profess to adopt^c, yet have they failed to do it in many instances, and those the most liable to suspicion of fraudulent suppression; because they are passages which decidedly overthrow their particular tenets respecting our Blessed Saviour^d. As they omit what it does not serve their purpose to retain, so do they add also, when they find it con-

^b See Nares on the Unitarian Version; p. 154, 181, &c.

^c Calm Inquiry, Introduction, p. iv.

^d See Magee on Atonement, &c. Postscript to Appendix, p. 16, 17, &c.

venient to weaken the precision of any expression by so doing. Thus they endeavour to evade the expression by which St. Paul couples our Saviour's name with the great God, as one and the same^c, by *inserting* the article where it does not really stand. "Our great God and Saviour "Jesus Christ;" which they would make, "*The* great God and our Saviour Jesus "Christ." So when the same Apostle says, "See that ye refuse not him that "speaketh," plainly intending our Saviour by "him;" the editors of the New Version prefer to insert *God* instead of *him*, lest they should admit a passage which gives authority, in any other than a vicarious manner, to Christ^s.

The present time will not allow me to enumerate the very many instances, in

^c Titus ii. 13. Του μεγαλου Θεου και Σωτηρος ημων 'Ιησου Χριστου, translated as if it were, του μεγαλου Θεου και ΤΟΥ Σωτηρος, &c.

^f Heb. xii. 25.

^s See Magee on Atonement, Postscript to Appendix, p. 207, 231, &c. whose remarks on this place apply to the whole conduct of the Unitarians in regard to the Bible.

which they have departed from that Version of the holy Scriptures which they had selected as the most correct; and it is a matter again and again to be noticed, as indicating their reason for so doing, that most, if not all, their desertions of their avowed model are on those points, wherein the word of the inspired writer, as commonly received, is most strongly adverse to the Unitarian doctrine. If this be not conclusive evidence, yet at least it is a strong presumption; which must operate powerfully to prove, to unprejudiced minds, that their profession of respect for the word of God is no more than empty sound at best, if it be not rather “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;” that it is assumed in order to evade the odium which open rejection of the Bible must produce, and to draw in those who might not suspect the share that is laid for them, under cover of a translation of God’s word by a Prelate of the Established Church. Their notes on those passages which they have not ventured to remove or alter in the text, are at the

same time weak in argument; while they shew that they have kept constantly in view their main object, to bend the Scriptures to their doctrines, and not to frame their doctrines according to the Scriptures. When we find them guilty of greater violations of fidelity, which affect the text itself, we cannot much wonder at any liberties which they take in regard to punctuation. But surely stops are not to be altered at pleasure; for the sense of the passage and the course of the argument must indicate their proper situation. These editors, however, besides an unjustifiable alteration in the words, have notoriously endeavoured, by alteration of the stops, to evade a strong expression used by St. Paul in favour of our Saviour's Godhead^b. The Apostle there styles him, "God over all, blessed for ever." They endeavour to change the sense by an alteration of the stops, though manifestly against the sense and natural course of the expression, and so to apply it altogether to God the Fa-

^b See Nares, &c. p. 168. Rom. ix. 5.

ther; striving to make out, by the change thus produced in the translation, their favourite point, that Christ Jesus was merely a man. By an equally unfair artifice, they attempt to escape from the acknowledgment, that he “*inherited*” a more excellent name than the angels; for they silently drop the word *inherited*, and use the words, “this day have I *adopted*,” instead of “¹ begotten” thee; and thus also do they distort that important passage in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians, “^m Who, being in the form of God, “thought it not robbery to be equal with “God: but *made himself* of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a “servant, and was made in the likeness of “men.” Little indeed can be thought of their reverence for the Scriptures, when they think proper to pervert this last by a strained accommodation to their own particular system, even while one of them ⁿ confesses, that if we allow Christ’s divine

^k Heb. i. 4, 5.

^l Εγώ σημερον γεγεννηκα σε.

^m Phil. ii. 6—9.

ⁿ See Carpenter’s Letters to Mr. Veyrie.

nature, the whole admits an easy explanation. With the same truth and honesty they quote Beza, as authority for asserting, that when St. Thomas said, "My Lord and "my God," in his address to Christ at his first interview after his resurrection, the words were only as an exclamation, signifying, "O God, how great is thy power!" and not addressed to Christ. Whereas Beza really says, that they "are *not* the "words of Thomas merely in admiration; "as the Nestorians eluded the passage; "but of him addressing Jesus himself as "very God and Lord, — nor is there any "other passage in these books more express for the invocation of Christ as the "true God." These editors however cut off all that does not suit their purpose, and quote a part only of the passage against that which they must have known to be the sense of the whole. The whole Epistle

• Hæc igitur verba quæ sequuntur non sunt tantum admirantis Thomæ, ut hunc locum eludebant Nestoriani, sed ipsum Jesum ut verum Deum ac Dominum suum compellantis—nec alius est locus in his libris expressior, de Christo ut vero Deo invocando.

to the Hebrews they discredit altogether, which is indeed less a subject of surprise, since it is so strong and pointed in support of the atonement. But they are not justified in quoting Origen as authority for the utter uncertainty of the author's name. He speaks there only of the scribe, but says of the Epistle, that it contains ^p the sentiments of an Apostle; commends any Church which shall receive it as St. Paul's; and declares his own readiness to come forward ^q in demonstration of that very point.

These, out of very many, are abundant proofs of the spirit in which the New and Improved Version is composed and published. Of their assertions, which rest merely on their own credit, it is needless

^p Origen says, that no one can tell who was the author of it; and so much is cited in the note to the Unitarian Version. But he also says, that it contains, *τα μεν νοηματα του αποστολου*, though the language is that of one who wrote from memory, *τα ειρημενα υπο του διδασκαλου* his own opinion is, that the matter was St. Paul's, and he commends any Church that shall receive it as his; though the scribe (*ο γραφας*) be unknown.

^q In his Epistle to Africanus.

to say any thing. Their own strength must support them as it can. But that they have wilfully deviated from the text of Scripture; that they have followed no authority, human or divine, any farther than where it seemed to accord with their system, is most manifest. “They have,” as has been well remarked, “been compelled, not only to invent a new translation for the text, but a new text for the translation.” What then can we think of their respect for that book which they acknowledge to contain a revelation from God? They have outgone their fathers of the old Socinian School in their denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as well as in the irreverence, not to say profaneness, with which they speak of the writers of them. The Racovian Catechism (p. 3, 4.) says, “No suspicion can possibly creep

It is well worth the reader’s while to consult the Dean of Cork’s very able work on Atonement and Sacrifice, and especially, on this point, the Postscript to the Appendix. The note in p. 12, and that in p. 255, are indeed fatal to the Unitarian Version, as are p. 82, 83, 84, &c. to their fidelity as to the text.

“ into the mind concerning those authors,
 “ as if they had not exact cognizance of
 “ the things which they describe. — It is
 “ altogether incredible, that God, whose
 “ goodness and providence are immense,
 “ hath suffered those writings, wherein he
 “ hath proposed his will, and the way to
 “ eternal life, and which, through the
 “ succession of so many ages, have by all
 “ the godly been received and approved,
 “ *as such*, to be *any ways* corrupted.”
 This was the opinion of the disciples of
 Socinus. The modern Unitarians however
 go far beyond this, and will allow no in-
 terpretation which does not accord with
 their notions of reason. One of them
 (Priestley) ventured to accuse the sacred
 writers of having written on matters “ to
 “ which they had not given much atten-
 “ tion, and concerning which they had
 “ not the means of exact information.”
 Another (Steinbart) affirms, that “ ‘ Moses,
 “ according to the childish conceptions of

* Letters to Dr. Price.

† See Erskine's Sketches of Church History, p. 67—
71.

“ the Jews in his days, paints God as agitated by violent affections ; partial to one people, and hating all other nations.” A third of the same communion (Semler) presumes to say, that “ Peter speaks according to the conception of Jews, and the Prophets may have deliberated the offspring of their own brains.” Such is the reverence of those who profess to hold that the Scriptures are the only repository of God’s will ; and such the conclusions which spring from their presumption, that they may reject, whenever they think proper, any of the particular doctrines contained therein. Their arbitrary version of the Scriptures is one of its consequences ; but the poison, which that offers, carries to all who will examine it with accuracy, its own antidote ; and by God’s providence there have not been wanting those, who were both willing and able to guard their fellow Christians against that device of the unbeliever. May the Lord in his mercy still stretch his arm over us, and preserve the incorruptness of his word in our hands ; and also a dutiful and

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reverend care in us, to hold fast that form of sound words which we have learned of him, till he shall come to take account how we have occupied that most precious talent committed to our charge.

SERMON VII.

ON THE ETERNITY OF PUNISHMENT.

MATTH. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

IN our proposed examination of those articles which the Unitarian advocate has set forth as the confession of faith of his party, in opposition to the Church of England; we come lastly to this particular, that “they reject the horrible doctrine,” as he calls it, “of the future eternal torments of the wicked; but believe, that their punishment will be remedial, as a purgation of crimes and evil habits; after which they will be restored to virtue and happiness.” Against this their belief two things are to be urged. The first, that it is unfounded in Scripture, and repugnant to

Scripture. The second, that it is inconsistent with the nature of God's avowed designs in regard to man, because its natural tendency is to produce an evil course of living.

Now the passages in holy Writ which apply to this matter are so clear, that they appear to be incapable of misconstruction; for they distinctly teach, that the pains of the damned shall be not only inconceivable, but also eternal. Such, in the first place, is my present text, which announces, in our blessed Saviour's own words, that "the wicked shall go into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." The trifling variation of expression in regard to the reward and punishment which we read in the English, does not exist in the Greek. Both are described as precisely of the same duration. The word used *in the original*, in both parts of the sentence, has not only the same signification, as is the case in our version, but it is precisely the same word^a; so that no

^a Καὶ ἀπελευσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰωνιον· οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰωνιον.

reason whatsoever can be drawn from this very plain and positive passage, for making any manner of difference between the duration of the happiness and of the torment. Now the Unitarian system holds the future certainty of happiness, both to the blessed and the cursed; with this distinction alone, that such happiness is not to commence equally soon with both; for after a course of purgatory pain, the most grievous sinners are to be restored, according to that system, to virtue and happiness. But if they build on the Scriptures, and there is no other foundation on which we can build securely, there is in them to the full as much and as decisive assurance of eternity of torment, as of eternity of enjoyment. That it is a horrible doctrine, if by horrible they mean such as must excite terror as its natural consequence in the heart of man, is not only the most true, but would to God that it produced that effect more deeply and more universally. For it is, if mankind would give to it full and due consideration, the most powerful of all inducements to urge them to work out their own

salvation, by mortifying the deeds of the flesh. But if by a horrible doctrine they mean to signify one which is unworthy of God, and inconsistent with his attributes, that assertion shall, I trust, be speedily proved to have no foundation. Plain reason will prove it, and, what is far more, God's own word ; wherein it were the height of impiety to imagine that he could make any declaration unworthy of himself. Reason will shew, that the punishment must necessarily be eternal ; because there is no deliverance from it at any time, except through our Saviour's mediation, and that mediation ceases after the judgment, when God shall be all in all ^b.

^b See Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Art. viii.

The Fathers understood, as the doctrine of Scripture, that punishment would be eternal. So Chrysostom : *Ανωτερω μεν την κολασιν ειπεν ενταυθα δε και τον κριτην δεκνυσιν, και την τιμωριαν αθανατον εισαγει.* So also Tertulian : " Affirmamus te (anima) manere post vitæ dis-
 " punctionem, et expectare diem judicii ; proque meritis
 " aut cruciatui destinari, aut refrigerio, utroque sempiterno." (*De Testim. Animæ*, c. 4.) Again ; " — qui
 " producto ævo isto, judicaturus sit, suos cultores in æternæ vitæ retributionem ; profanos in ignem æque
 " perpetem et jugem." *Apol.* c. 18.

That punishment of some sort after death, for the offences committed during this life, is not repugnant to reason, may also be inferred from the concurring tradition of all nations, whether civilized or barbarous ; of which there never perhaps has been found one which did not hold this, as well as the doctrine of reward for the righteous. And if the *reward* be eternal, as even the Unitarians allow that it shall be, what is the argument, either from reason or analogy, which can set aside the eternity of punishment? The God who has power to appoint and to execute the one part of the system of retribution, has the same power also in regard to the other part. And it has been abundantly shewn, by the conduct of holy men under the Gospel, as it had been also even under the far more difficult yoke of the Mosaical Law, that man is capable of making himself inheritor of the everlasting reward, as well as liable to the everlasting punishment. He is capable through our Saviour's atonement, whatever be the incapacity of his own unassisted nature : though the unbeliever, who

denies the atonement, cannot admit its efficacy. The equity of the case requires, that, as fair and equal opposites, the punishment should be commensurate with the reward. For if it were otherwise, let us but consider how powerful would be the temptation which such a system, as that of the Unitarians in this matter, would set before mankind. To the virtuous, they propose eternity of happiness, and that perfect in its kind; and therefore beyond the very highest idea that the imagination of man can conceive. So far as reward may entice us, here is indeed every thing *as to futurity*, which might induce us to mortify our lusts and passions at present. Yet who is not aware, that every thing promised in futurity has hardly the same influence on the human mind, and can hardly control the affections at the instant of temptation so powerfully, as the allurements which are then present, and which act immediately on the passions? If then on the opposite side were set the very extreme of misery, equally complete, and equally inconceivable in its kind with the happiness of the

blessed, but *not* equally everlasting, the preponderance must immediately be thrown where the Almighty would never have thrown it, into the scale of vicious gratification. There would be present enjoyment, opposed indeed by future torment; but yet by such torment only, as, however severe for a time, would assuredly end in the perfection of felicity for evermore. It is impossible that man should not catch at such an idea as this, if it could but be maintained. And thus amidst all the precepts of godliness, and all the exhortations and inducements to it, which are set forth in the word of God, we should have a counter-declaration of far superior weight and efficacy; an invincible persuasive to evade the whole obligation which the Gospel lays upon us. Is it to be conceived, without impiety, that the Almighty should either threaten us with that which he does not intend to execute; or that he should endeavour to bring us to the practice of virtue, by means which even human discernment can perceive to be utterly inadequate to the accomplishment of that ob-

ject? Can any religious mind endure to think, that the Most High is capable of defeating the object of all his precepts by a system of his own appointment? Yet this must be the case, if he has appointed eternity of blessing for the godly, and set against it, as a counterpoise, no more than a temporary curse for the ungodly, however long be the time during which that curse shall produce the fruits of misery. For, according to the Unitarian system, it is only in the duration of reward and punishment that any difference is supposed to exist. In the degree of both they agree with the Scriptures, which say, that “^c Eye
“ hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither
“ hath it entered into the heart of man to
“ conceive, the good things which God
“ hath prepared for them that love him :” and which describe the punishment of sinners as equally inexpressible. But according to their hypothesis, those who love God and those who hate him are to be in exactly the same situation, after the lat-

^c 1 Cor. ii. 9. Isaiah lxiv. 4.

ter shall have undergone their purgatorial pains. Those pains however would be far from sufficient to restrain mankind, were the certainty of their comparative shortness once thoroughly established. No punishment can possibly be imagined more exquisite in its kind, than the happiness of heaven will be in its kind: none, which by the greater intensity of anguish for a limited period, could be considered as an equivalent to that which is to endure for ever. But however untenable such a position be, the case does not admit even that; for the true statement of the Unitarian theory is this: That we are to choose, whether we will sacrifice those carnal and forbidden gratifications which are at present within our reach, for the sake of an inestimable reward: or whether we will take the full enjoyment of all forbidden gratifications at present, with the certainty of an inconceivable torment after death; which torment however should last only during a long, indeed, but a determinate period; and bring us at length to the same state of perfect celestial blessing, to which the righteous

had been admitted long before, immediately after the decision of their lot. This is much the same with the doctrine of the Gnostics in the first century, “^d that the “ pains of hell shall be purgatorial and remedial, and shall end in perfect blessedness.” Now the most powerful argument that can be urged against giving way to present temptation, is the shortness of its enjoyment, compared with the eternity, which will follow. But by the Unitarian creed that argument is turned against righteousness; for the eternity of happiness in future is thereby assured alike to the obedient and disobedient; the only difference is in the relative duration and degree of earthly mortification during this life, and of penal pain after it, previous to that happiness. The former, mortification upon earth, being that which the righteous must prepare themselves to endure, according to our Saviour’s warning, “^e In the “ world ye shall have tribulation:” the latter, purgatorial pain, that which transgres-

^d Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. cent. I. part ii. c. 1.

^e John xvi. 33.

sors must expect; who, after a course of unrestrained indulgence in this world, are on that supposition to be consigned for a certain and bounded time to remedial punishment. Now we cannot but observe every day, how much the prospect even of *eternal* punishment wants weight in the minds of those who do believe it, to restrain them entirely from yielding to present temptation. And surely no man will deny, that if for eternal we should substitute temporary torment, the impression on our minds must be materially weakened; and every person who can bring himself to believe that doctrine, so alluring to the profligate and negligent, will be turned loose upon society, to do whatsoever he may think worth the risk of a long, but not an endless punishment. And is the state of mankind such, that it should seem desirable to diminish the restraints laid on mortal passions? Do we find that the evil affections and lusts are easily kept under, even by all those terrors which we all acknowledge when we think of them? And should we think more of a prospect of diminished

peril, and consequently of diminished interest? Far from it. So far as reason can enable us to judge, it is not to be denied, that it is most consistent with God's desire to prevent wickedness, that he should punish, and proclaim his intention to punish, the transgression of his laws, with pains as extreme as the happiness with which he will reward the observance of them. And as to purgatorial pains, the world has long since too plainly and too lamentably seen the infinite abuses and iniquities to which they lead the way^f.

The next point to be considered is the evidence of Scripture in support of the

^f Gregory the Great plainly enough foresaw the errors into which the doctrine of purgatory would betray mankind; and he argues well against such a supposition, both from reason and Scripture. "Antiquus iste
"persuasor in membris suis, id est in mentibus iniquo-
"rum, futuras pœnas levigat; quas quasi certo fine de-
"terminat, ut eorum culpas sine termino correptionis
"extendat: et eo magis hic peccata non finiunt, quo istic
"æstimant peccatorum supplicia finienda. Quibus bre-
"viter respondemus. Si quandoque finienda sunt suppli-
"cia reprobtorum, quandoque finienda sunt ergo et gau-
"dia beatorum. Per semetipsam namque veritas dicit,
" 'Ibunt hi in supplicium æternum, justi autem in vitam
"æternam.' " *S. Gregor. Mag. Mortal. lib. xxxiv. c. 19.*

eternity of punishment ; and that, be it remembered, is evidence which, if plainly made out, must be altogether decisive. For though it be useful to do away the objections and silence the presumptuous assertions of the unbeliever, if that be possible, by shewing the equity of God's ordinances, and proving that they may be vindicated even by human reason ; yet that is only to be done as a satisfaction to our minds. The most full and conclusive evidence that any thing will be, is the declaration of the Almighty that it shall be.

Now the eternity of torment to the wicked is in his word declared expressly, both in the Old and New Testament. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the last day, states the eternity of the blessing and of the curse, to the righteous and to the wicked, as distinctly as St. Matthew in my text :
 “ 8 Many of them that sleep in the dust of
 “ the earth shall awake, some to everlast-
 “ ing life, and some to shame and *everlast-*
 “ ing contempt.” In like manner Isaiah

8 Dan. xii. 2.

closes his prophecy with the declaration concerning the wicked in the last day, that “^h their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” So in another place he speaks of the lot of the righteous and of the wicked, alluding very distinctly to the *eternity of punishment* which awaits the latter: “ⁱ Who among us,” says he, “shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*?” Such expressions prove what was the knowledge possessed by the inspired writers under the Mosaic dispensation, respecting the nature of those pains which are appointed for sinners hereafter.

But the Unitarian always professes to think more lightly of the precepts of the Old Testament, as belonging to a system of less importance, than that which was brought to our knowledge in the Gospel. Let us therefore turn thither, and see whether the same doctrine be not expressed more frequently, and, if possible, in a manner more incapable of being misunder-

^h Isaiah lxvi. 24.

ⁱ Ibid. xxxiii. 14.

stood, in the books therein contained. And here, though we have already touched upon the passage of my text, it ought to be again mentioned among the rest; for although there had been no other to the same effect, yet this is so direct, and so incapable of perversion, that it alone might decide the question; especially when we recollect, that the words therein recorded are those of our Lord himself, and delivered in the most solemn and impressive manner. They are words which even if spoken by a prophet, as our adversaries choose to assert, and he too the Prophet, as they declare, of the last and most perfect revelation sent from heaven, must by their own selves be admitted to utter incontrovertible truths: and in this declaration of our Lord and Saviour, as we maintain, and as I trust in God that we always shall maintain, it is asserted that “these (the wicked) shall go away into *everlasting* punishment.” To this however more abundant testimonies shall be added, that it may be seen, how well able all Christians are upon this point also, as well as on those before discussed,

to give a reason for the faith that is in them; and that, a reason which cannot be shaken, because it stands on the immovable footing of divine revelation. St. Matthew, from whom we take the record of the words above mentioned, asserts again in another place the same thing in effect; that is, the eternity of punishment hereafter, and the doctrine is there again related from our Lord's own mouth: "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into *everlasting* fire." What that fire is, may be seen from the very next verse, which follows in conclusion of that discourse: "It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." The "everlasting fire" in the first part is the same, most obviously, with the "hell fire" in the last: it follows therefore undeniably, that hell fire is everlasting, and the punishment of sinners in it is equally everlasting; for it is in

* Matth. xviii. 8, 9.

regard to that punishment that this epithet is applied to it. The fire being eternal, it follows that those for whom it is prepared must abide in it eternally. “¹The smoke of “ their torment ascendeth up *for ever* :” and those who are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone “^m shall be tormented day “ and night for ever.” Similar to this is the passage in St. Mark’s Gospel, but yet more full and urgent on this very point of the eternity of the punishment : “ⁿ It is better “ for thee to enter into life maimed, than “ having two hands to go into hell, into “ the fire that *never shall be quenched* ; “ where their worm dieth not, and the fire “ is not quenched :” and the same words are again repeated in the two following verses. How can we possibly interpret such direct and positive expressions for the *everlasting* continuance of torment to the damned, in the sense of remedial or purgatorial torments alone? Or how can we get rid of St. Mark’s declaration respecting the punishment of him who shall blaspheme the

¹ Rev. xiv. 11.

^m Rev. xx. 10.

ⁿ Mark ix. 43, 44, 45, 46.

Holy Ghost; that he “^ο hath never forgiveness, but is liable (*ενοχος*) to *eternal* “damnation?” Even those unbelievers who reject our Lord Jesus as our God and our Atonement, yet acknowledge him as a true Prophet, and as the very greatest of that favoured and highly endowed and privileged class of men. And how then can they, consistently with such an acknowledgment, presume to dispense thus with the admission of that most important truth thus solemnly revealed by him? It is sufficiently obvious, that man has abundant inducement in his own consciousness of sin and evil desert, to seek some escape from the dread of never-ending woe. But we cannot avert danger by shutting our eyes against it: and though we have all too much reason to wish that eternity of torment for unrepentant sinners were not a part of God’s system, yet it being declared as such, it were well that men should recollect the folly, nay more than that, the wickedness also of making their minds easy

◦ Mark iii. 29.

by an unauthorized theory which contradicts the divine revelation. Perhaps the Unitarians will take refuge in their denial of plenary inspiration to the Holy Scriptures, for they dare not deny that both the passages in St. Matthew's, and that in St. Mark's Gospel are to be found there; nor does their pattern for correctness in the sacred text^p reject, or throw any doubt on the original of either. It is indeed no unreasonable thing to suppose this of them, after the liberties which they have taken with the sacred text, as was shewn in my last discourse; but it is impossible, I should hope, that any man can be so persuaded, who believes that there was really any guidance of the Holy Spirit exerted upon the Evangelists. It is utterly impossible, if they were inspired at all, that they should have been permitted to deliver as truth, that which is not truth; as the words of our Saviour, those which he never uttered; and to promulgate under the sanction of his supreme authority such doctrine, if, as

^p Griesbach.

its adversaries maintain, it be repugnant to the attribute of mercy, which is so conspicuously manifested by the Almighty, and so particularly asserted to be his peculiar property.

That the doctrine of punishment, not only inconceivably grievous in its quality, but also eternal in its duration, is the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and of Jesus Christ our Lord himself, has been shewn; sufficiently, as it may be hoped, to satisfy any one who is desirous, not to support a preconceived system, but to ascertain the truth. It is sufficiently clear, to prevent any one who allows the word of God its fair weight and proper influence from setting aside that doctrine, which, full of terror as it is to us, is yet unable to restrain the inconsiderate and profligate from doing those things whereby they lay themselves under the sentence of that eternity of pain. Dr. Priestley, indeed, with that irreverence which is too often visible in his writings, advises to keep death, and all its consequences, out of sight. “It is not necessary,” says he, “to dwell in our thoughts

“ upon death and futurity, lest it should
 “ interrupt the business of life, and cause
 “ us to live in perpetual bondage⁹.” On
 their hypothesis it may not indeed be necessary ; but if future punishment shall be eternal, the necessity is most urgent and undeniable. And since even that is not enough to prevent sin, we have at once an answer to the vain plea, that it is inconsistent with God’s mercy to punish man eternally for temporary offences. Man is God’s creature, the offspring of his will and pleasure ; yet such a one that God designs to effect his everlasting happiness, if he shew himself worthy to enjoy it. The two courses of present conduct are placed before him, with an eternity attached to the end of each ; eternity of happiness to obedience and virtue, and of misery to disobedience and sin. The terms therefore are equal ; and there can be no injustice, no derogation from the divine mercy in such a system. Man is indeed in a state of such imperfection *now*, it is impossible for him not to transgress. But to this

⁹ Sermon on the Death of Mr. Robinson.

there are two obvious answers: the first, that such imperfection is not the condition in which God originally created him; the second, that in spite even of it, he may yet save himself through the atonement and mediation made by our Blessed Saviour. Though this last consideration must not be admitted by a Unitarian, for it is contrary to his system, because, denying our Lord Jesus Christ to be any more than a mere man, he sees well enough that it is impossible for such a frail being to make any satisfactory atonement for other beings frail as himself. Though therefore the unbeliever must, in consistency with himself, deny this doctrine, yet to a Christian it is distinctly revealed, and full of joy and hope. It is an abundant vindication of God's mercy, of his love and desire to promote the welfare of the human race, that where he had originally set immortality and death, blessing and cursing, in equal balance, as the rewards of obedience or disobedience; he has himself now thrown the weight into that scale which is favourable to us; he has himself found out, and

offered to us, the remedy for the fatal consequences in justice due to the transgression of his own law, a transgression which incurred the forfeiture of that claim, which man in his innocency had been allowed to make. And let us recollect, that in the case of our first parents there was no natural propensity, as there is now, to vice; but they were guarded on the one side as much as they were assailed on the other. They were fully apprized of the consequence of transgression, and yet allowed themselves to be drawn into it. After this, the very exact execution of the terms in which the original covenant between God and man had been made, could not have been more than justice. But, “where sin abounded,” as says St. Paul, “grace did much more abound:” God’s mercy so prevailed, that the Mediator was immediately promised, as he was afterwards sent, to make atonement for the sin committed, and to give to mankind a power through him, of regaining that inheritance which in strictness they had forfeited altogether. That all should suffer for the fault of

our first parents, is no more unjust than that all should have enjoyed the blessed condition appointed for us, if they had not transgressed. Of that side of the covenant none would have complained; and it is only a sign of our depravity that we dare to murmur against the other; to set up God's mercy to the utter overthrow of his judgment; and in the case before us, indeed, to rely upon what *men* choose to think that it requires him to do, in spite of *his* own revelation of what he *will* do, because it is, in his eyes who cannot err, just and right so to do. “¹ Nay but, O man,” says the Apostle to those who presume to argue upon that very question concerning the equity of God's decrees in regard to mankind, “who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Of that humility however, which utters, or which acquiesces, in such an argument as his, our adversaries are, it is to be feared, but little conscious.

¹ Rom. ix. 21, 22.

There is in all their writings too obvious an endeavour to set up their own understanding as the test of truth, to acknowledge no duty which is not grounded on reasons comprehended and approved by themselves, and to deny all doctrines which are contrary to their ideas of wisdom and fitness. And denying, as they do, that this life is a state of probation for eternity, they have a sort of security in which they may go on to any thing that the imaginations of mortal man may suggest to them. For if eternity of punishment be done away, the probation is made of none effect; since it becomes no more than a question open to the decision of every one, whether he thinks present gratification without restraint an equivalent to the temporary torment which they set up by their system, as the only future punishment of disobedience. I say, by their system, because it is clear that it is not any part of the doctrine of holy Scripture. The state of trial upon their plan is an unequal state, and one which it is blasphemous to impute to the unerring God. For we must remem-

ber that he holds out to us the idea of himself as of one, who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” who has appointed that the “*just*, and only the just, “shall *continue* in his sight;” who takes pleasure in righteousness, and is offended at iniquity. And yet this article of the Unitarian’s creed holds out to us a system which gives encouragement to vice, as if it were God’s own; though it be really in contradiction to his unequivocal declarations.

This then is one of the inconsistencies, this is one instance of the impiety into which the system of unbelief adopted by this sect must necessarily force them. The consideration of the unwarrantable liberties which they are thus driven to take with the word of God, will, it is to be hoped, prove the weakness of their cause; and more than counterbalance, with all who have any due reverence for their Almighty Creator, those allurements which the Unitarian doctrine holds out to the vanity of man, equally as to his depravity. For their doctrine courts popularity by the

one, as well as by the other method. By reducing every thing that is revealed to a level with the human understanding on the one hand, and by rejecting what is most alarming, and what expresses the most decided intolerance of mortal iniquities on the other, it brings the acts of God before the tribunal of men to decide on the truth or untruth of his declarations, and the propriety or impropriety of his decrees. But we have St. Paul's declaration that Christianity does not proceed by such methods as these: that the devices of man must give way, whatever they may be, or however supported, when we find them to be standing in opposition to the revelation which God has made: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, *through God*, to the pulling down of *strong holds*," such as these are, in which the unbelievers of our days endeavour to establish themselves; and strong holds, though not so strong but that the word of God utterly overthrows them, of

1 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

human judgment and human devices. The course pursued by true Christianity is that of "casting down imaginations and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "The preaching of the cross," says that same Apostle, "is to *them that perish* foolishness." Let all who hold any part of its doctrines as foolishness take heed that they be not among the number of those who thus perish. Let us all look to this; let us not allow ourselves to be drawn aside by the snares of our own vanity; nor yet by the devices of others who have been themselves so ensnared. The foundation laid in God's word standeth sure; and so long as we have the support of his own recorded revelation, let us not fear to maintain his truth, whether it be revealed clearly or in mystery, against all the sophistry of man, the allurements of our own passions, and the suggestions of the tempter.

SERMON VIII.

CONCLUSION.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

SUCH is the caution which arises as a natural inference from the consideration of that system of scepticism and unbelief, which we have now endeavoured to examine in all its avowed principles. The sect which avows them has set itself in open and declared opposition to those opinions which are held by the Church of England, with regard to the very foundations of the Christian religion. It has however, I trust, been shewn, that all the

difficulties and objections which they bring forward as impediments to the reception of the mysteries of Christianity, are grounded in no better principle than human vanity. For they set up their own reason as a sufficient measure of God's revelations; and whatever does not accord with their ideas, they make no scruple to reject it, and that too frequently in most offensive and indecent language. The great and increased activity which they have exerted in promoting their cause, by disseminating the principles of *their* persuasion, and reviling the profession of sound Christianity, cannot but have been visible to every attentive observer; from that time especially, when the restraints originally laid on them were withdrawn. But there is, I trust, nothing to be feared from their efforts as to any change which they can introduce *generally*, though much mischief may be done to unlearned or unstable individuals. The foundations of the Christian Church are laid in a rock, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Still however is it our duty to provide some remedies against the par-

tial evil which their confident and positive assertions are not unlikely to produce. Refuted as they have been, by the repeated answers of various able advocates, on the great cardinal point of our Saviour's Deity and Atonement, still do they bring forward the same assertions with the same assurance, as if no one had ever replied to or disproved them. They tell those who will listen to them, in a summary manner, that there is nothing in the arguments which are urged against them ; and even the word of God itself is treated by them with as little ceremony. For instance, one of their principal upholders, when pressed with one of those positive texts of St. John's Gospel which is fatal to their blasphemous assertion of the mere humanity of Christ, whom the Unitarians declare to have been born in the natural way of his mother Mary, a man in all respects like other men ; thinks it sufficient coolly to reply, that there is nothing in it. The Apostle's words are these : “ * And now, O Father, glorify thou

* John xvii. 5.

“me with thine own self with the glory
“which I had with thee *before the world*
“*was.*” It is not easy to conceive words
more directly affirmative of the preexistence
of our Saviour before his assumption of
our human nature. Yet to this it is only
answered, that “no argument can be drawn
“from this ambiguous text^b.” If this be
ambiguous, it is not easy to conceive what
can be express or positive. Sometimes
they will venture even farther than this,
and insinuate, where they have not the
confidence plainly to assert it, that the
words which in reality tend to overthrow
their system are rather favourable to it.
Thus the same person says of the following
passage of St. Paul, ‘that “if it be not de-
“cisive in favour of their doctrine,” it may
“at least be regarded as neutral.” Now the
passage of which this is asserted is no less
than one of the most positive for the actual
deity of Christ, and for his coequality
with the Father: “^d—Christ Jesus; who,
“*being in the form of God, thought it not* .

^b Belsham, *Calm Inquiry*, p. 148.

^c *Ib.* p. 145.

^d Phil. ii. 6, 7.

“ robbery to be equal with God : but *made*
“ *himself* of no reputation, and took upon
“ him the form of a servant, and was made
“ in the likeness of men.” Now what can
be thought of those who openly say that
this passage upholds their rejection of our
Saviour’s Godhead, or, at the utmost, is
neutral on the question ? What ? But that
they are determined, by the most barefaced
though ungrounded assertions, to prejudice
the minds of those who will listen to them,
resisting themselves, and stifling in others,
the conviction, which it is difficult to ima-
gine that they do not see, and which in-
deed their endeavours to alter the sense of
this passage have long since shewn that
they do see, to arise naturally from this and
similar expressions. What can we think of
their desire to weigh the truth fairly as it is
declared by the Evangelist ; when, finding
that they cannot set aside the express words
of his Gospel, they in another instance
resort to a sort of mental reservation,
and tell us, that our Saviour’s assertion of
his preexistence before Abraham*, (which

* John viii. 58.

must of course, in its natural sense, do away all idea of his being a mere mortal,) means only a preexistence '*in the Divine purpose*? Such a miserable subterfuge is not indeed deserving of deliberate reply, for it is hardly to be supposed, that even the very person who makes it can feel himself convinced of that which he asserts. We all may know, by almost every day's experience, how tenacious men are of those opinions which they have embraced, especially when they are taken up in contradiction to the general sense of mankind. There is, then, a pretension to superiority of discernment, which urges them forward to assert, and which supports them in maintaining the assertions which they have made. And so soon as the vanity of human reason, the vain idea of its entire competency to judge and to reject any revelation, is once set up, the voice of the whole Christian world is scorned as the dictate of deluded ignorance; the judgment of the most wise in sacred knowledge is described as the bias

‘ John x. 3.

of prejudice and bigotry. By a specious shew of what they are pleased to miscall liberality, a name which has in these days been, more than any other, abused by its application to licentious practices and unauthorized scepticism ; by an ostentatious display of that name, they lay a dangerous snare for the ignorant or the unwary, and seek to promote its fatal effects by the assurance of confident, though unsubstantial assertions. The vanity of man, especially of those who are wise in their own conceits rather than in the wisdom which is from above ; that vanity of man is naturally delighted by any idea of the supremacy of human reason ; by the notion of its ability and fitness to decide even on the reception due to the revelations of heaven itself. And indolence also, and ignorance, will betray many, who are not so open to the snares of self-conceit. How many are there, who, though they will be the last to admit it, are, from the habits of their lives, incapable of weighing evidence ; who lie particularly open to the influence of either the one or the other ; of either gratuitous assertions

and false criticism, or the delusive shew of liberality and freedom in opinion ! Some there are who will examine nothing ; but take up at once with the opinions which a specious and plausible statement sets before them, under fair, though false colours. Others, on the contrary, who advance rashly to the trial of any question set before them, though without any of that practice in examination which produces the faculty of weighing the comparative value of contrary assertions ; of sifting and discriminating evidence. For their presumption arises from that very inexperience, which at once prevents them from being fit for such disquisitions, and at the same time conceals from them their own unfitness. How many are there, who, falling into the hands of artful men, before whom they are conscious of inferiority in understanding, yield up their assent without an effort ; choosing rather to take human wisdom for their authority, than to examine for themselves ! And yet on points so plainly revealed as these, nothing more than industry and consideration is requisite. Let the

more learned reason with the infidel, and confute his reasonings; but even the most unlearned Christian may find in the Bible, if he will be at the pains of searching there, and humble himself enough to submit the opinion which he has taken up, to that which he shall find there; even the most plain and unlearned Christian may find abundant proof of all those doctrines which Christians hold, and Unitarians deny. They will indeed seek to shake him, by urging, though falsely, the incorrectness of our version of the New Testament. But even though we were to give up all which they have fraudulently suppressed and altered in theirs, there would still remain enough of which they have not dared to get rid in that way; enough to prove the doctrines which ours and every other Christian Church holds in opposition to them.

The doctrines of the Unitarian sect strike at the very vitals of Christianity, and endeavour to secure to their followers a sort of comparative impunity, an escape from *eternal* punishment, which may embolden them to venture on the denial of the most

important truths revealed by God, and committed to ourselves for unreserved acceptance and belief. Therefore it is, that although the most particular and cardinal points of their system have been repeatedly discussed and overthrown by far more able defenders of our faith, it may yet be useful to have taken a comprehensive view of the whole, and shortly to have demonstrated the fallacy of each peculiar doctrine which that sect has avowed. The indolent may not be terrified at so short a discussion of the matter; and since the proofs on which I have insisted have been chiefly drawn from passages of holy Writ, whose authenticity is not denied, even by our adversaries, a demonstration of the falsehood of their tenets is thereby afforded, which must carry conviction to any unbiassed mind, whether of the learned or unlearned. The Apostle exhorts us to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” I have proceeded so to do, upon that which, in spite of whatsoever presumption may suggest to the human mind, ought ever to be esteemed the best proof: I have proved

the truth of those doctrines which we hold and they refuse, by the word of him whose word is truth. Such evidence as this lies well within the compass of the most ordinary capacity, and is at the same time the most convincing testimony which can be laid before the brightest and most cultivated abilities. The inductions which appear at first sight to be reasonable, may upon farther examination be found to have been unfairly drawn : the course of an argument may be warped, and its result unfairly stated. Of abstract reasonings, the unlearned are not competent judges ; neither are those, who, with better abilities and means of information, neglect to give the subject a full investigation. Whether they do thus from presumption or negligence, or from a prejudice previously conceived in favour of new and strange doctrines, and what are falsely called liberal ideas in religion ; neither of them is more likely to convince the gainsayer, or themselves, to learn and to hold fast that which is good. The word of God, however, on this as well as on all other points of vital importance,

is clear to all who do not seek to wrest it to their own purposes. To that we must all bow, and on its foundation may securely make our stand, and defy alike the snares and assaults of the infidel.

And let it be remembered, that we enter upon this controversy, not as on one which we have provoked by any novel opinions of *ours*, but in defence of that which has been the Christian faith from the first: which was, with very few exceptions, universally held in the earliest and purest ages of the Christian Church, the age of the Apostles themselves, and of their contemporaries and immediate successors. The Unitarian, proud in his own conceit of his own reason, will tell us, when he finds that venerable authority to be against him, that it is of no value compared with the discoveries which the freedom of religious inquiry has now made known. But that freedom is not now for the first time so employed; for we all know, that in the earliest times there were a few who erred, and overthrew the faith of some: there were those who, being unlearned and un-

stable, wrested the Scriptures, as these do now, to their own destruction. The Unitarians indeed still tell us, that they were the primitive Church, who did thus, though their assertion has long ago been most triumphantly refuted, by the learning and abilities of a distinguished Prelate of our own days. They still keep alive the dispute, and hazardous as controversy is to the truly Christian spirit, yet it does not therefore become us to permit their dangerous doctrines and fallacious assertions to pass unheeded, dispersing their mischief, and scattering their snares on every side, to poison and entrap the unwary. All Christians, but particularly those dedicated to the sacred office, are called upon to come forward; to take to them "the whole armour of God," and "fight the good fight of faith;" but never let us forget that which in the heat of controversy is too often allowed to escape our recollection, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." If it be almost impossible to suppress indignation at the coarse and profane manner in which things

the most sacred are occasionally treated by the adversary, yet should a strict guard be kept over the mind of him who engages in the question, lest his indignation degenerate into anger and personal animosity.

But whatever be the dangers which this controversy shares in common with all others, still it is not to be considered as altogether unproductive of good. The mercies of God are never more conspicuous, never more loudly call for our gratitude, than when, from the evil attempts of his enemies, he produces good to his faithful servants; when he makes those questions which the unbeliever agitates, in the hope of disturbing the belief of Christians, the means of strengthening and confirming that faith; by causing its evidences, and the immoveable authority on which it rests, to be laid in every possible form before the eyes of the world. Controversy on the great fundamental articles of our religion, like the moving of the waters at Bethesda, excites a salutary influence, of which those who go fairly into it, to seek the good which God has sent to man, be-

come partakers, to the establishment of their spiritual strength and health. The cavils and objections of the infidel, which if silently insinuated without reply would be more pregnant with mischief to those on whom they might light, are thereby brought before the world, examined and sifted. The poison is shewn to be poison, and the minds of many who might otherwise have rested quiescent in indolence, exposed to the influence of unbelieving cavils, without being able to "give a reason for the hope that is in them," without having any power to confute the gainsayer, will now, it is reasonably to be hoped, "prove all things;" and if that be fairly done, they will the more effectually "hold fast that which is good."

And would to God that controversy were confined to points which affect the basis of religion, which threaten the foundations of the Christian faith! Would to God, that where a difference of opinion prevails on points not essential to salvation, both sides alike would refrain from urging, as well as from repelling, with such vio-

lence as too often leads to bitter animosity, those opinions which they hold, and their opponents deny! Would that all parties would recollect that in which all agree, that "charity never faileth:" that charity "is not easily provoked; doth not behave itself unseemly; thinketh no evil!" The truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, and all that belongs to it, must be maintained. The defence of the outworks tends to keep off the attack from the citadel, and the negligent maintenance of the one may in fact betray the other. But there is no advantage in intemperance; nor is there any thing, either in reason or religion, which justifies the corruption of earnest and fervent zeal, into fiery and intemperate bitterness. Let not Christians preach Christ "of contention" among themselves; but if contention is forced upon us, let it be maintained by all believers, against those who are the enemies to the faith. Of those professed enemies the present sect of Unitarians are the chief; and it must be observed by any one who considers the state of religious dissent in these days, that

Unitarianism is, as it were, the sink into which those who have been long unsettled in their opinions, and have run through many different persuasions, often fall at the last. This is well known to be the case with a large and powerful sect, which once differed principally on a point of discipline from the Established Church of this land; many of whose members however are now falling into this state of positive unbelief. The writings of several among the German divines also have long been tending that way; and that imaginary illumination, which produced disbelief in the doctrines and person of our Blessed Redeemer, which has in our own times been too fatally connected with the total abandonment of religion under any form whatsoever, and with the rejection of true morality altogether, proceeded from that same, which they now set up as a sovereign principle—the fancied supremacy of Human Reason.

It might perhaps be highly resented, were *we* to say, that the system of faith of this sect is the natural offspring of licen-

tious freedom of conduct; though immoral practice naturally begets an inclination to set aside that authority which most decidedly condemns it. But the writings of *their own* principal authors in our country declare that such is the case. One describes them as those “^s who have heard “Christianity from their infancy, who “have in general believed it for some time, “and not come to disbelieve it, till they “had long disregarded it.” Another^h says the same thing in effect; for by “popular “superstition,” he manifestly intends the established faith, and by “a rational system of faith,” the unbelief of the Unitarians. “Men,” says he, “who are *most* - “*indifferent to the practice* of religion, “and whose minds *therefore* are least attached to any set of principles, will ever “be the first to see the absurdity of a popular superstition, and to embrace a rational system of faith.” Holding such

^s Priestley, Letter to a Philosophical Unbeliever, vol. ii. Preface, p. 9.

^h Belsham's Sermon on the Importance of Truth, p. 32.

maxims as these, how can it happen otherwise, than that they should attack the established religion in whatever form it may be found? And in fact they have always been the enemies and revilers, in Protestant countries of the Reformed, in papal countries, where they have dared to shew themselves as such, of the Roman Church; in short, of Christianity itself, and for its own sake: for it is not against any abuses peculiar to any nations, but against the Godhead of our Redeemer, that their attacks are directed. Their comfortless doctrine sacrifices to human vanity that greatest of all consolations, which we derive from the doctrine of the Atonement. It annihilates, so far as they can effect their purposes, that love of Christ which was the motive of all his acts of mercy, and is the foundation of all encouragement to mortal frailty. For if his Godhead be done away, there is an end to his grace, to his spontaneous sacrifice for sin. If he were a mere creature, sent to do his Creator's pleasure; that love on which the Gospel dwells so emphatically, that love which the Apostles

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and primitive Christians regarded as passing man's understanding, fades away into nothing. The act which is done from obedience in a creature to his Creator, however beneficial to others, calls not for their gratitude towards *him* ; because their benefit is not, in that case, the object which excited him to the act : it is a mere act of obedience, and would have been equally performed, if it had tended to their prejudice. I need not labour to prove how utterly repugnant is such a theory to the whole tenor of Christianity, which always dwells, and takes pleasure in dwelling, on the *love* of Christ. If therefore the Person of the Son be not united in the Godhead of the Father, and so a sharer in all his acts, he can have shewn no love towards mankind in any thing which he has done. What then becomes of those Scriptures whose authority is acknowledged by all parties, which describe such love as the motive to all the acts in which Christ ever has conferred, or ever shall confer, benefits on mankind?

Even the Jews, though they also deny

Christ, can perceive and expose that deceitful profession, which sets forth as Christians those who reject his Godhead. They consider the admission of that doctrine which our Church holds in this matter, to be essential to the real profession of the Christian faith. They consider that every Christian holds Christ to be the very Son of God, and not, as the Unitarians say, the son of Josephⁱ. They argue so far truly, that if he were not the Son of God in a

i "Your doctrine is so opposite to what I always understood to be the principles of Christianity, that I must ingenuously confess I am greatly puzzled to reconcile your principles to the attempt. What! A writer that asserts that the miraculous conception of Jesus does not appear to him to be sufficiently authenticated, and that the original Gospel of St. Matthew did not contain it, set up for a defender of Christianity against the Jews, is such a system of inconsistency as I did not expect from a philosopher, whose sole pursuit hath been in search of truth! You are pleased to declare in plain terms, that you do not believe the miraculous conception of Jesus; and that you are of opinion, that he was the legitimate son of Joseph. After such assertions as these, how you can be entitled to the appellation of a Christian in the strict sense of the word, is to me really incomprehensible."
David Levi's Letter to Dr. Priestley.

peculiar manner, if he did not preach the word of God as *his own* word, and command that it should be received upon *his own* authority; they perceive that if he did not do these things of *his own* true and real right, he could have no *delegated* right, nor any authority *by commission* at all. They perceive that he claimed to be God and Lord; and therefore, if he were not such, the person who preferred such a claim falsely, could not be a true prophet^k. They rightly understand his claims, as being layed so high, that he must have been an impostor, if he be not very God.

Would that men might attend to that caution given by the Apostle, "Beware lest any one spoil you through philoso-

^k "He preached himself to be the light of the world, which is an instance not to be paralleled in Scripture. For the duty of a Prophet consisted in his delivery of God's word or message to the people: not in presumptuously preaching himself. Again we meet with the same example in John xiv. 6. where Jesus preaches himself as the way, the truth, and the life. It is manifest that he was not sent by God to us as a prophet, seeing he was so deficient in the essential character of a prophet." David Levi, *Letter to Dr. Priestley*, p. 14.

“ phy and vain deceit !” Would that they might lay aside the vanity of human conceit, and bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ ! Such has always been the mode of conduct adopted by the Reformed Church of England : such has been her diligence in examining, and her caution in embracing or rejecting opinions in religion : such her modesty and humility in submitting every doctrine, without exception or reserve, to the test of God’s word. Had such been the conduct of the Unitarian, we should not have seen the preference openly given to their own speculations¹, before the revealed truths which have been handed down in the recorded word of the Most High. Had such been the respect of that sect towards the Divine word, we should not have heard God impiously accused, as he is by them; of “ merciless tyranny” for his declared

¹ “ To make discoveries ourselves, though the search may require time and labour, is infinitely more pleasing, than to learn every thing by the information of others.” *Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson.*

^m “ If God mark and punish every instance of transgression, he must be a merciless tyrant, and we must

intentions of punishing the unrepentant sinner at the day of judgment. Such are the impieties into which the maintenance of opinions which have their real foundation only in human arrogance betrays men. And yet even themselves can sometimes see, that prejudice is full as unreasonable when it runs against, as when it favours the commonly received opinion: “ There
 “ is no class or description of men but
 “ what are subject to particular prejudices,
 “ and every prejudice must operate as an
 “ obstacle to the reception of some truth.
 “ It is vain for unbelievers to pretend to
 “ be free from prejudices. They may in-
 “ deed be free from those of the vulgar;
 “ and the very affectation of being free
 “ from vulgar prejudices, and being wiser
 “ than the rest of mankind, must indispose
 “ them to the admission even of truth, if
 “ it should happen to be with the common
 “ peopleⁿ.” Thus can even Unitarians

“ be tempted to wish the reins of universal government
 “ in better hands.” *Belsham’s Serm. on the Importance
 of Truth*, p. 34.

ⁿ Priestley’s Letter to a Philosophical Unbeliever,
 Part ii. Letter 5.

argue, when they do not perceive how much the argument makes against themselves, and yet suffer conceit to lead them on in the maintenance of a favourite hypothesis, even in the very face of expressed conviction !

When such are the principles of this sect, that they stand in direct opposition to every thing which we most honour and revere, to the glory of God and the Deity of his only begotten Son our Redeemer, how can they profess to be wholly ignorant, “ why it should of late have grown “ into a fashion among the Clergy to de- “ claim against the Unitarians?” Has it not, to use their own words, of late “ grown “ into a fashion” among the Unitarians, to put themselves forward in reviling those sacred truths, to the defence of which the Clergy have solemnly dedicated themselves? They have not, say they, “ attacked the “ Ecclesiastical Establishment, the reve- “ nues of the Church, or the characters of “ the Clergy.” Ought these considerations to have closed our lips? Ought we to have been awake to our temporal interests, and

neglectful of the foundation on which rest all our hopes for evermore? Though the foundation of God's word standeth sure, yet the weak brother must be guarded, lest he be made to slip from his footing upon that foundation. This is the consideration which has called forth animadversion and rebuke upon their specious fallacies. We are placed in our station to watch for those committed to us, "as they that must give an account." We are commanded to be ever ready to "give a reason for the hope that is in us." May God grant, that such reason be never wanting to the defenders of Christianity; and may he in his mercy extend to all, to believers and to unbelievers, in his good time, the grace of our Redeemer; that all may receive and obey, with true humility and entire obedience, the doctrines of Salvation.

THE END.



